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NOVEMBER 1999 NO. 35

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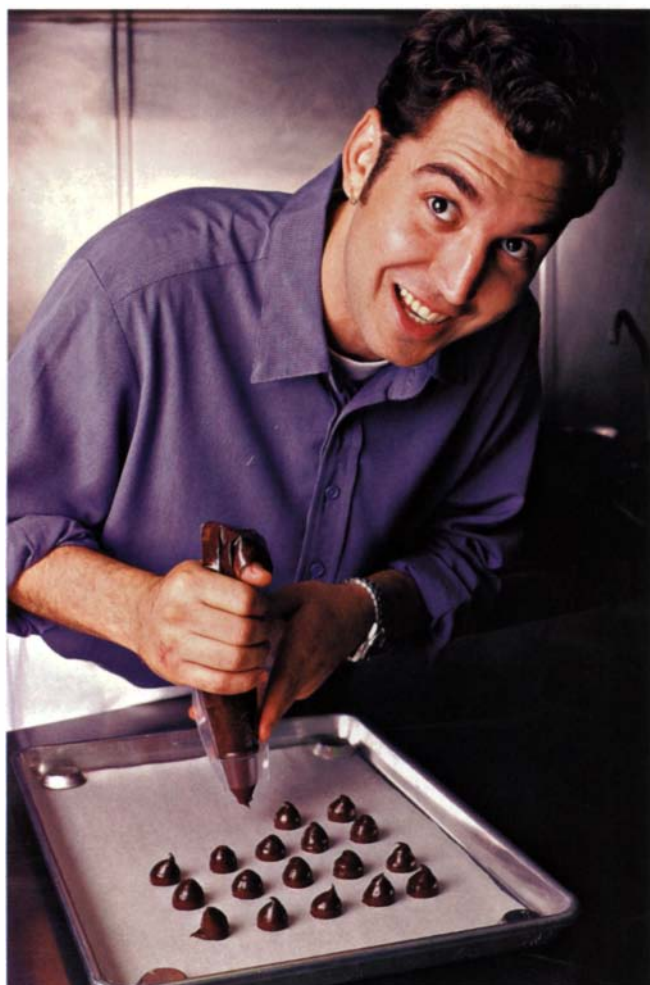
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Cover photo, Scott Phillips; image editing, Biff Bivona.

These pages: top left series, Martha Holmberg; above, Ben Fink; series below, Grey Crawford; bottom left, Ben Fink.



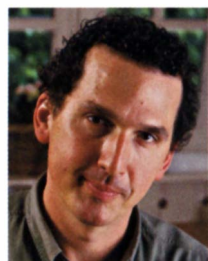
50 Top chefs show off the details that make their home kitchens such exciting work spaces.

CONTRIBUTORS



It's been a great year for **Ris Lacoste**, the executive chef of 1789 Restaurant in Washington, D.C. The Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington named her Chef of the Year, she was nominated for a James Beard Award for Best Chef of the Mid-Atlantic, and she just finished chairing her chapter of the American Institute of Wine & Food. None of this fazes Ris, who simply loves cooking and

the people she meets through her work. After landing a job assisting Anne Willan at La Varenne in Paris many years ago, Ris went on to work with Robert Kinkead for thirteen years, first at 21 Federal in Nantucket, and later in Washington. Despite her busy schedule, Ris eagerly attacked the subject of winter squash (p. 32) for *Fine Cooking*, as she likes to write and develop recipes, too.



Greg Atkinson ("Flavors of Thanksgiving," p. 26) is the executive chef at Seattle's venerable Canlis Restaurant. Before donning the toque at Canlis,

Greg earned accolades for his work at Friday Harbor House on Washington's San Juan Island. He is the author of *In Season: Culinary Adventures of a San Juan Island Chef* and *The Northwest Essentials Cookbook* (both published by Sasquatch).

You can watch **Joanne Weir** ("Chicken Thighs," p. 38) on PBS where she hosts the series "Weir Cooking in the Wine Country." A professional chef—she spent five years at Chez Panisse—Joanne is an award-winning cookbook author, food writer, and cooking teacher. In 1996, she was awarded the inaugural Julia Child Cooking Teacher Award of Excellence. Her most recent book, a companion to her show, is *Weir Cooking: Recipes from the Wine Country* (Time-Life Books). Her other books include *You Say Tomato* (Broadway Books) and *From Tapas to Meze* (Crown).

Jim Peyton ("Mexico's Rice Dishes," p. 42) has been researching Mexican cooking for nearly thirty years, and he often teaches classes on the subject. He has written three books (published by Red Crane Books of Santa Fe, New Mexico),

including *El Norte: The Cuisine of Northern Mexico*, *La Cocina de la Frontera: Mexican-American Cooking from the Southwest*, and the recently released *Jim Peyton's New Cooking from Old Mexico*, which provides a history of Mexican cooking, traditional recipes, and an introduction to Mexico's new wave cooking: *nueva cocina mexicana* (sometimes called *nouvelle azteca*).



After growing up in Georgia, **Charles Pierce** ("Crêpes," p. 46) made his way to France, where he studied cooking at La Varenne. After several years in Paris, he settled in New York and began a career in food writing. He has edited *The New Settlement Cookbook* (Simon & Schuster) and has written several books, including *The Chicken Parts Cookbook* (Random House) and *Beach House Cooking* (Williams-Sonoma). He divides his time between New York City and Sag Harbor, New York.

Rocco Ligrine ("Chocolate-Filled Beignets," p. 55) is the executive pastry chef of Brasserie Perrier, one of Phila-

delphia's top restaurants. After graduating from The Philadelphia Restaurant School, Rocco trained with prominent pastry chefs around the country, including François Payard in New York, and Bobby Bennett at Le Bec-Fin, Brasserie Perrier's sister restaurant.

Both **Katy Sparks** and **Alan Tardi** ("Two Chefs, Same Ingredients," p. 60) are seasoned chefs who have worked at some of New York's finest restaurants.

Katy heads up the kitchen at Quilty's, which serves inventive American fare with Asian accents. A graduate of Johnson & Wales Cooking School, Katy refined her skills at The Quilted Giraffe.

Alan is the chef and owner of Follonico, where he's behind the stove every night cooking Italian. Before Follonico, Alan cooked at Lafayette, Chanterelle, and Le Madri.



Rose Levy Beranbaum's mother was a dentist and kept her away from sweets, but her grandmother, who had a candy store, fed her rock candy and Hershey's kisses on the sly. The first home-baked cake



Rose ever tasted was the one she made herself, at age 19, from the *Joy of Cooking*, a buttery, velvety spice cake. Today she's regarded as one of America's best-known baking

experts ("Smooth, Creamy Cheesecake," p. 64). Rose holds degrees in food science and culinary arts from New York University and is the award-winning author of seven cookbooks, including *The Cake Bible* and *Rose's Christmas Cookies* (both published by William Morrow) and *The Pie & Pastry Bible* (Scribner).

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Tonight's special: Moose Wellington

It's difficult for me to fully sympathize with Esther Whitby's complaints about the unavailability of "ethnic" ingredients in Bloomington, Indiana (*Fine Cooking* #33, p. 8). I've lived in Alaska for 29 years, four of them in a wall tent. Cooking is done on a woodstove and, until two years ago, water had to be hauled out of a well in the yard. It is 85 miles to the nearest supermarket—when the road is passable. Yet,



we manage to eat well and enjoy trying new recipes from many cuisines.

It is, I'll admit, a challenge to locate some of the ingredients, but that's why mail-order and freezers were invented. It does take a lot of planning (for example, zesting lemons when they are affordable and available and freezing the peel to make lemon biscotti a few months later) and some creative substitutions (such as using a moose tenderloin instead of beef in the Christmas "Beef" Wellington).

We also nurture herbs under a grow lamp during the long winter so that we can have authentic mint juleps for a Kentucky Derby luncheon and a few arugula leaves in a salad. But isn't that what ethnic cuisine is all about—using the best ingredients you can find to make the tastiest dishes that you can?

Please keep publishing ethnic recipes. You taught me how to use—and love—Thai fish sauce.

—Jeanne K. Berger, Hope, AK

You helped me find my heritage

I can't begin to tell you how thrilled I was to see your article in *Fine Cooking* #33 about rolling pins (p. 55).

Many years ago while eating springerles, I asked my German grandmother how the designs got on the cookies. She described the rolling pin and told me how it worked. Unfortunately, the rolling pin she owned has been passed down a branch of the family that I'm not in touch with. I've consulted friends of Germanic descent, antique-store proprietors, and many cooking and baking catalogs, and not one person has ever seen or heard of the thing I described. So every year, my sister and I bake springerles at Christmas, only we cut them with a knife and they have no designs.

Then I see the picture in your magazine—finally, I know I'm not crazy! Thank you so much.

By the way, the source you listed, The-House-on-the-Hill, has a catalog available for \$2; the mailing address is PO Box 7003, Villa Park, IL 60181.

—Lisa S. Rowe, via e-mail ♦

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The risks of eating raw cookie dough

My kids love to help me bake in the kitchen, and they especially love to make (and eat) cookie dough. How can we safely reduce the risks of salmonella and still enjoy our cookie-making sessions, which include tasting the dough?

—Joan Vardanega, Snohomish, WA

Molly Stevens replies: Before becoming alarmed about the dangers of eating raw cookie dough, it's important to understand exactly what the risks are. According to the American Egg Board, one out of every 20,000 eggs might contain the bacteria known as *Salmonella enteritidis* (though in areas where salmonellosis outbreaks have occurred, the number

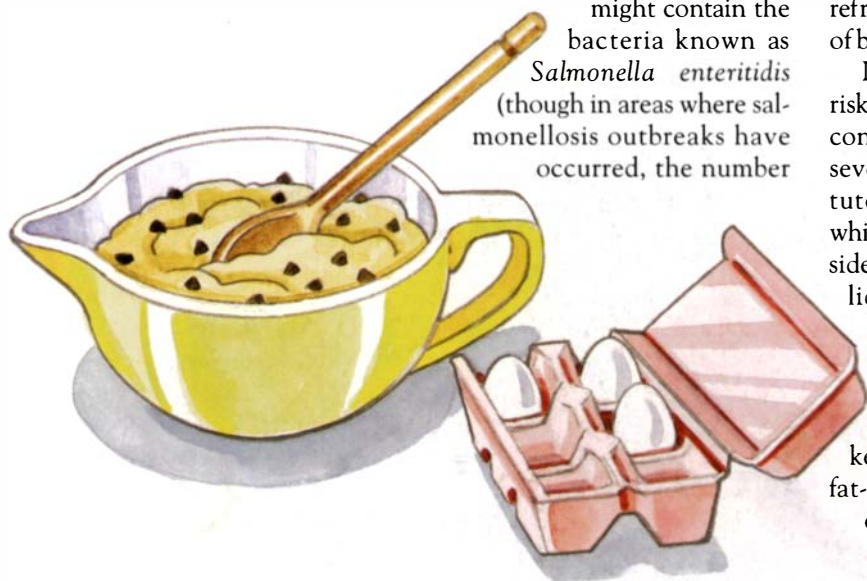
is higher). That puts your chances of finding an infected egg at about 0.005 percent. And even if an egg is infected, it isn't likely to cause illness unless it has been left unrefrigerated for more than two hours (the bacteria multiply rapidly at room temperature). To be sure, some people (young children, the elderly, and those with weak immune systems) are more susceptible. In any event, a good defense is to buy fresh eggs from refrigerated cases only, store the carton on an inside shelf of your refrigerator (not on the door, where the temperature tends to fluctuate), and keep extra cookie dough refrigerated between batches of baking.

If you want to reduce the risks even further, you might consider baking with one of several brands of egg substitutes, such as Egg Beaters, which are usually sold alongside fresh whole eggs. These liquid egg replacements have been pasteurized, eliminating the possibility of salmonella infection. Originally marketed as a no-cholesterol, fat-free alternative to whole eggs, these products consist of egg whites (about

99 percent) along with stabilizers and flavoring. In my tests, I followed the manufacturers' recommendation of substituting ¼ cup liquid egg replacement per large egg. This worked quite well in cookies and quick breads that rely on creamed butter and baking soda for leavening. A side-by-side test of cookies made with whole eggs versus cookies made with an egg substitute might reveal the latter to be slightly chewier and less rich, but the difference is fairly negligible. (The egg substitutes were much less successful in delicate sponge cakes that require whisking whole eggs and sugar until light and frothy. The egg substitute didn't whisk up to a ribbon as whole eggs will do, and the resulting cakes were flat and chewy.)

Keep in mind that although pasteurized egg products are free of bacteria after processing, they can become contaminated once opened. Treat them as you would any fresh, perishable food: keep them refrigerated and respect the "use by" date printed on the carton.

As a final note, I'd like to applaud your efforts to teach your kids to bake from scratch,



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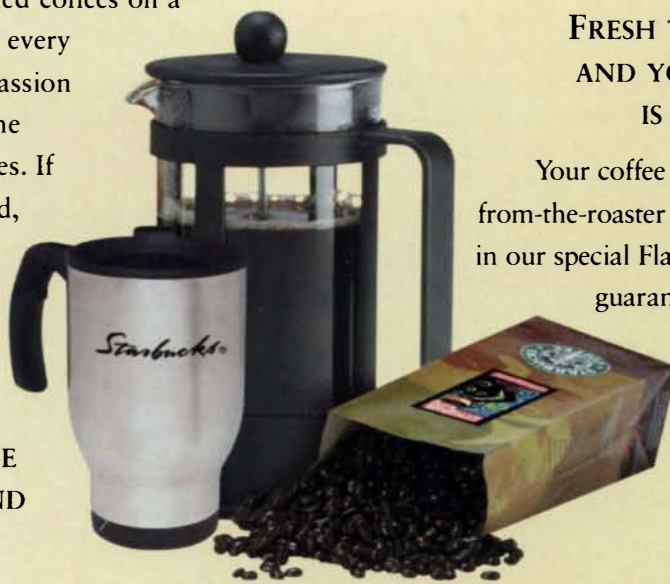
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and to suggest that if you decide to use fresh eggs, you treat this as an opportunity to show them how to handle them safely.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.

Such sweet pineapples

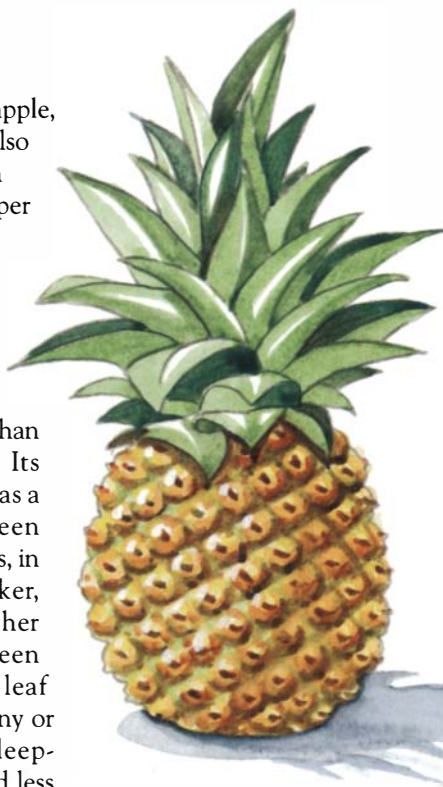
Is it my imagination, or have fresh pineapples gotten sweeter?

—Isidora Whitestone,
Austin, TX

John Loughridge at Del Monte Fresh Produce replies: If you've noticed more sweetness in your fresh pineapples, I'd wager that you've been eating a new hybrid that we've been marketing since 1996. This new variety, called Del Monte Gold™ Extra Sweet, has a lower acid level, which makes it taste nearly twice as sweet as the tradi-

tional varieties of pineapple, such as Champaka. It also has four times as much vitamin C, up to 60mg per two-slice serving.

Del Monte Gold™ (referred to as MD-2 among the researchers who developed it) is more barrel-shaped and square-shouldered than traditional varieties. Its outer shell is thin and has a golden color with green tinges around the eyelets, in contrast to the thicker, yellow-green skin of other varieties. Its dark-green crown is erect, and its leaf tips are smooth, not spiny or serrated. Inside, the deep-yellow flesh is softer and less fibrous than you might expect from a pineapple. And its flavor suggests hints of coconut and mango.



Del Monte Gold™ was developed over a ten-year period in Hawaii as a way to boost pineapple consumption

in the United States. It's now grown in Costa Rica to give it a year-round season. For the time being, it's the only extra-sweet variety that's commercially available.

When choosing any variety of fresh pineapple, look for a symmetrical fruit that's heavy for its size. The crown leaves should be fresh and green, and the pineapple should smell fragrant and sweet. Store it in the refrigerator or any cold, humid place.

Pineapple doesn't ripen after it has been picked, so it's best to eat it within a day or two after bringing it home.

John Loughridge is the marketing director for Del Monte Fresh Produce North America Inc., in Coral Gables, Florida. ♦

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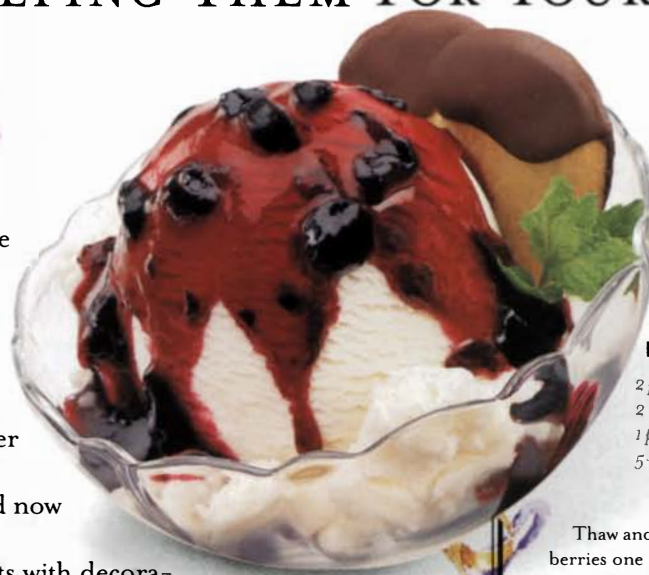


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fresh-fruit delights in our free *Jams & Jellies*

Made Pure and Simple booklet—just a phone call away at 1-800-240-3340.

Oh, and another reminder—don't forget that half the fun is giving them away.



BLUEBERRY JAM

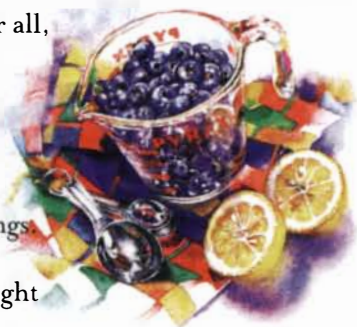
2 pints frozen blueberries
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 pouch Ball 100% Natural® Fruit Jell® Pectin
5-1/4 cups sugar

MAKE IT!

Thaw and drain blueberries. Crush blueberries one layer at a time. Combine 3 cups crushed blueberries and lemon juice in a large saucepot. Stir in Fruit Jell® pectin. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar, stirring to dissolve. Return mixture to a rolling boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam if necessary.

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One-hand salad server stows flat

I fell in love with this simple wooden tool the minute I saw it. Handsomely crafted of cherry, oak, maple, or walnut, the “one-hand salad server” is really a multi-purpose pair of tongs with the unique ability to store flat, thanks to a clever hinge. Flip the arms open, and a spring creates a nice easy tension for grasping salad

greens, pasta, or even food out of the sauté pan (especially nice for nonstick cookware). Pivot one arm 360 degrees, and the server stores absolutely flat. Made in Massachusetts by ShortCutt Woodcraft, the server is available at gourmet stores and craft shows for \$12.95. Or call Len Short at 508/240-7945 to order.

—Susie Middleton, associate editor, Fine Cooking

Ginger juice packs intense ginger flavor

My new favorite condiment is pressed Ginger Juice, made by The Ginger People (the same folks who put out a delicious line of candied Australian ginger). Just a dash of ginger juice packs all the warmth and zing of fresh ginger, and you can use it the same way. Add Ginger Juice to soy-sesame vinaigrettes, curried eggplant, beef or chicken marinades, dried fruit compotes, applesauce, or wherever else you'd use ginger. And because it's liquid, you can use it to spike a banana-peach smoothie, a glass of iced tea or lemonade, a cup of hot cider, and even a vodka martini. To order, call Royal Pacific Foods at 800/551-5284 or visit www.gingerpeople.com.

—Amy Albert, associate editor, Fine Cooking



Grind wet and dry ingredients with Sumeet Multi-Grind

Making a fine paste in a food processor or a blender just isn't the same as making one with a mortar and pestle. Growing up in India, I crushed my fair share of fresh coconut with a grinding stone, so I know what it takes to get the ideal, uniform texture. Challenging ingredients like lemongrass, coconut, chiles, and even some fresh herbs get cut up into finer and finer pieces without ever turning into the smooth, thick paste that laborious, practiced hand-grinding can produce.

But even in India, many urban households changed over to electric grinders about twenty years ago when enterprising manufacturers came up with a device that duplicated the results of our ubiquitous grinding stones. Sumeet, one of the pioneers, then answered the prayers of expatriate subcontinentals with a North American model (UL-tested) geared not just for us but for anyone with similar needs. Last year, they perfected a smaller version of that model which is perfect for the home cook. It resembles an oversize coffee grinder but has a mixing bowl that detaches from the motor, allowing it to grind both wet and dry ingredients.

The smaller Sumeet Multi-Grind became an immediate success in our house with its first demanding test—grinding fresh coconut chunks and cilantro together for a green chutney.

The machine is not only efficient, it's terribly fast. Within a minute or so, the Sumeet can also reduce dry ingredients—nuts, grains, seeds, whole spices, dry chiles—to a fine powder. It can make breadcrumbs, spice rubs, almond flour, peanut butter—you name it—in a flash. But what I really relish it for is those smooth, firm pastes made from wet and dry ingredients (Thai green curry, Mexican *mole*, Indian chutney, Moroccan *harissa*) that are so vital to the cuisines of Asia, Latin America, and North



Africa. And I use it for any recipe that traditionally requires grinding with a mortar and pestle.

There's no doubt that traditional mortars and grinding stones are much more beautiful than any electrical appliance, but unless you've got an infinite supply of time, muscle, and knowledgeable human kitchen helpers, you'll be glad to give the Sumeet room on the counter. To get your own, call the Sumeet Centre in Toronto (800/268-1530) for pricing (about \$90) and other information. Or visit www.sumeet.net.

—Niloufer King, food writer and anthropologist



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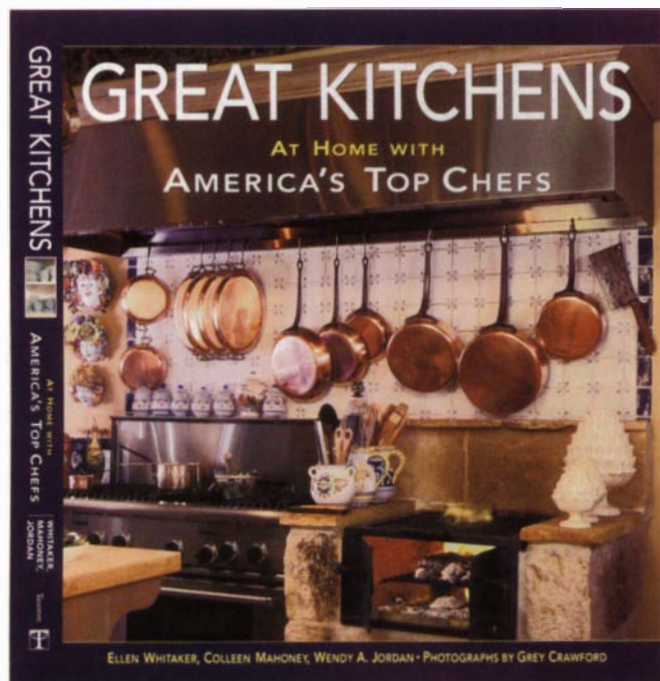


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READER SERVICE NO. 70

TASTED & TESTED

Take a peek inside the home kitchens of restaurant chefs



Not all chefs have beautiful home kitchens. But you can imagine what happens when a successful chef finally gets the opportunity to plan his or her fantasy home kitchen. Out come tumbling all those ideas from years of observing and maneuvering around the best and worst of restaurant kitchen design. Now a new book from the Taunton Press takes a peek inside the home kitchens of 26 of these chefs, many of them *Fine Cooking* authors such as Rick Bayless, Lidia Bastianich, Mary Sue Milliken, and Hubert Keller.

What the authors of *Great Kitchens: At Home with America's Top Chefs* found inside these kitchens were not only smart design and storage features, but bold, individual styles, and a few culinary trends to boot (like fireplaces

in the kitchen). Authors Ellen Whitaker, Colleen Mahoney, and Wendy A. Jordan took pains to interview the chefs about their lifestyles and their design decisions, and the result is a book rich in ideas and resources. The 240-page hardcover book (\$34.95) is a big, colorful collection of 300 photos of these terrific kitchens, with close-ups of smart features and the chefs cooking with their families. There are also 26 line drawings, a small collection of recipes from the chefs, and source information for all the appliances. For a closer look at some of the sharpest details, turn to "Great Details," p. 50. *Great Kitchens* will be in bookstores in October, and it can also be ordered directly from Taunton (800/888-8286 or www.taunton.com).—S. M.

A large, white KitchenAid Professional hand mixer is shown at an angle. It has two silver TurboBeaters attached. The brand name 'KitchenAid' and the word 'Professional' are visible on the side of the mixer. A small text box with a dashed line pointing to the beaters contains the text: 'TurboBeaters™ make fast work of the toughest tasks.' To the right of the main image, there is a list of new colors: 'NEW COLORS: Cobalt Blue, Empire Green, Onyx Black'. Below this list are three small inset images showing the mixer in each of these colors: Cobalt Blue, Empire Green, and Onyx Black.

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Grating cheese (and zest) with ease

Occasionally a tool from my husband's workbench pays a visit to the kitchen—needle-nose pliers for yanking out salmon bones, for example. Recently another tool made the trip, but this one—the Microplane rasp—won't be returning to the basement shop. I'd heard of people using this fine-gauge woodworking rasp as a grater, and I finally tried it myself. I'm in love.

The original Microplane is a slender piece of lightweight stainless steel that doesn't look like much of a muscleman, but its superfine grating slots make it a powerful performer. I get virtual snowdrifts of grated Parmesan with hardly any pressure supplied by me. The resulting fine-textured cheese is perfect for blending into risotto or pasta sauce.

Zesting citrus is even more fun than grating cheese, because with just a flick back and forth you get a shower of fragrant, colorful zest and not a jot of pith. And because you don't need to apply



much force to get the goods, you don't risk scraped knuckles. To gild the lily, the company that makes the rasp, Grace Manufacturing, now makes more models: a narrow profile rasp with an easy-to-grip handle (for a tool junkie, maybe not as serious looking, but much easier to

hold—I like it better); a wider, flatter rasp with a handle and a plastic frame; and another wide-body model with larger teeth for a coarser result. To order, or for more information, call 800/555-2767 or visit www.microplane.com.

—Martha Holmberg, editor, Fine Cooking

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How to Mix Flour, Fat, and Water for a Flaky Pie Crust

Serving pie for dessert at Thanksgiving is as much of a tradition as roasting a turkey. During this time of year, many people who rarely make pies from scratch take the time to do just that. If I have one piece of advice for holiday pie bakers—novice and otherwise—it's this: relax.

My second bit of advice is to make pies more often. That way, you'll learn through visual and tactile experience exactly what a good dough should look and feel like.

Although rolling and shaping pie dough (both of which will be covered in an upcoming Technique Class) are important aspects of pie-making, a great pie begins with ingredients combined in such a way that the dough is easy to roll and shape and will produce a flaky pie crust that's tender, not tough.

Mix lightly for flaky pastry

Most pie doughs are basically made of flour, fat, and water. The fat is cut into the flour to form crumbs, varying from a meal-like consistency to pea-size pieces. When these crumbs are moistened with liquid, they form a malleable dough. When heated, the pieces of fat melt, and the liquid in the dough steams apart the pockets left by the melted fat. As the dough bakes, the moisture evaporates, and the dough dries in layered flakes to form a crust.

Begin with cold ingredients. Keep your measured and diced butter and shortening well chilled until ready to use, and use ice water for the liquid. If the fats melt before they're in the oven, they are absorbed into the flour, and any chance of producing a flaky pie crust is lost.

A food processor works great—to a point. Many bakers only make pie crust by hand, swearing that this is the only way to control the dough. Others use the food processor exclusively, exalting in the ease and convenience. I use a processor for the first step—cutting the fats into the flour, which works really well (see the recipe on p. 20 for details). The trick is to keep an eye on the consistency of the fat and flour.

When it comes to adding the liquid, however, the food processor has a few drawbacks. If you add the liquid with the processor running, it's difficult to distribute evenly—something that's crucial to a tender pastry—and the dough can form a wet mass around the steel blade before a sufficient amount of liquid has been added. To avoid these pitfalls, I dump the flour-fat mixture into a large bowl and add the liquid by hand.

Add the liquid slowly; stop sooner than you think

The amount of liquid needed in your pie crust will vary from

Preparing the dough



Combine the flour and fat in a food processor until the mixture looks like coarse meal strewn with larger pieces of fat. The larger pieces are vital to a flaky pastry. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl.



Add the liquid by hand. Drizzle a tablespoon at a time around the outside of the bowl. With a fork, push the mixture toward the center.



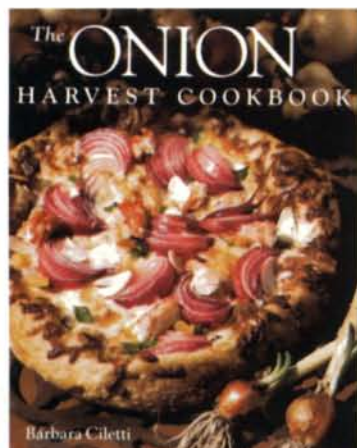
Look for larger clumps of dough forming. This signifies that enough water has been added. Too much water will toughen the crust.



With floured hands, press the dough against the side of the bowl, forming two balls. All the crumbs should adhere to the balls and leave the bowl clean. If not, add a few drops of water.

From The Taunton Press

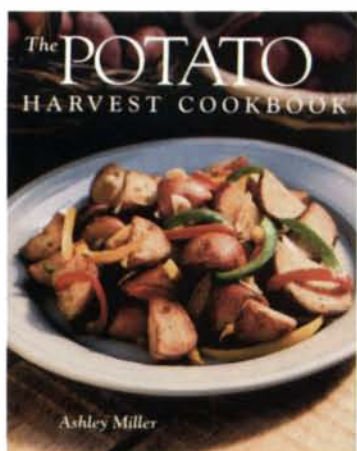
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An advertisement for 'Duckling'. It features two plates of food. The top plate shows a roasted duckling with a sesame seed crust, served with a side of vegetables. The bottom plate shows a vegetable medley with orzo, tomatoes, and other vegetables. The word 'Duckling.' is written in a large, elegant script font across the middle. Below it, the text reads: 'It's what's in when dining out. It's going all out when dining in.' At the bottom, it says 'FOR YOUR FREE HOME ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE CALL 1-800 DUCKLING.' and 'READER SERVICE NO. 38'. A 'MAPLE LEAF FARMS' logo is visible on the right side of the bottom plate.

She Turned Her Passion For Cooking Into A Profitable Business!

Have utensils, will travel could be Susan Titcomb's motto. Twelve years ago, Titcomb, a 39 year old mother from San Diego, California, had a passion for cooking and a desire to control her own destiny. Armed with an idea, her husband's support, very little capital and virtually no business experience, she started the country's first personal chef service. Personally Yours Personal Chef Service became an overnight success and spurred her on to become a cofounder of the United States Personal Chef Association. "A personal chef can make \$35,000 to \$50,000 a year, depending upon the hours worked and the number of clients," says Titcomb. Since most clients work



full-time, Titcomb goes into their home and cooks 10 meals for the whole family. Her service includes grocery shopping, preparation, cooking, packaging and cleanup. With a cost as low as \$8 per meal, per person, Titcomb has a long waiting list. So what does it take to become a personal chef? "Organization, persistence, a love of cooking and a little know how," says Titcomb. *For more information, call the United States Personal Chef Association at: 1-800-995-2138 or go to <http://www.uspca.com>.*

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TECHNIQUE CLASS

batch to batch. Have a bowl of ice water ready so that you can measure out a tablespoon at a time. As you add the water, use a kitchen fork, tines down, to push the mixture toward the center of the bowl with each addition (see the photos on p. 18). To ensure a flaky pastry, use a light hand. Stirring or mashing blends the flour and fat together, eliminating the potential for flaky layers. When pastry dough is overworked in this manner, the resulting mass can't absorb enough water. And without enough water, little or no steam can form in the oven to expand the layers.

As you reach the minimum amount of water, the dough should feel cool and moist. Add the remaining water a teaspoon at a time; you might not need it all. Too much water makes a sticky dough, which results in a tough and chewy crust.

To test your dough, gather up half of it with floured hands, pressing it against the side of the bowl. All the crumbs should adhere and leave the bowl clean. If not, add a few drops of water. Shape the dough into disks (see the directions above right). I find that indenting the top of the disk helps eliminate a domed surface and also ensures a more even thickness as the dough is rolled. Dust the disks generously with flour and seal them in plastic. The dough needs to be refrigerated for the gluten to relax, for the fat to firm, and for the moisture to permeate the dough. After the dough chills at least half an hour, it's ready to roll.

*Carole Walter is the award-winning author of *Great Cakes and Great Pies & Tarts* (both from Clarkson Potter). ♦*

Readying dough for a rest



Flatten each ball into a disk. This gives you a head start on rolling.



"Cuddle" each disk to round its shape. A gentle touch will keep you from overworking the dough.



Use the side of your hand to indent the surface with a tic-tac-toe pattern. Dust with flour, wrap tightly in plastic, and chill.

Too crumbly vs. just right



Too little liquid will cause your pastry to crack and fall apart during rolling and shaping. If your dough crumbles when you try to gather it into a ball, like the dough on the left, add water a teaspoon at a time until you can form a more cohesive ball that doesn't crumble when you pull it apart, like the one on the right.

Flaky Pie Pastry

Yields two 9-inch crusts.

11¼ oz. (2½ cups) all-purpose flour, chilled

1 Tbs. sugar

¾ tsp. salt

½ tsp. baking powder

½ cup (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes and chilled until firm

½ cup vegetable shortening, cut into small pieces and chilled until firm

5 to 6 Tbs. ice water; more as needed

Put the flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a food processor. Process for 5 seconds to blend. Add half of the butter and half of the shortening. Toss to coat with the flour, being careful of the blades. Pulse 4 or 5 times and then process for 4 to 5 seconds. Add the remaining butter and shortening and repeat.

Empty the mixture into a bowl and follow the photos starting on p. 18 for adding the liquid and mixing the dough. Cover with plastic and chill for at least half an hour. You can freeze the dough for up to 2 months; thaw overnight in the fridge before using.



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Choosing Good Wineglasses

Try a quick experiment: pour the same wine into both a juice glass and a wineglass and then taste the wine from both. You'll likely see that the shape and size of the wineglass both function to show off the wine's color, aromas, and flavors much better than the juice glass does.

Here are some guidelines for picking good-quality wineglasses so you get the most out of the wines you like to drink.

Uncut and uncolored

All good wineglasses have key features in common.

A wineglass should be made of clear, untextured glass. Examining and appreciating a wine's color is impossible with ceramic, colored, etched, plastic, or patterned stemware. Those cut-glass goblets you got as a wedding present may be beautiful, but they're not the best for picking up on a wine's subtleties.

Glass is fine; crystal is better. The surface of crystal is relatively coarse compared to glass, which is slicker. Crystal's surface actually "grabs" the wine, making it trail down the sides of the glass more slowly after you swirl. Thus, alcohol evaporates more slowly, so aromas take longer to dissipate. The wine stays on the surface longer, so you get to enjoy more nuances, and you get a better look at the wine's "legs." I also prefer crystal because even when ground quite thin, its lead content makes for a glass that feels heavier and more substantial in your hand.

Speaking of lead, in spite of well-merited health concerns, wine doesn't stay in the glass

Anatomy of a wineglass

The bowl should be uncut, uncolored, unetched glass to give you the best look at the wine's color. It should hold at least 12 ounces.

The foot should be wide enough to provide good stability without appearing large or bulky.

The lip should be cut and polished (rather than rolled or beaded), which more smoothly guides the wine to your palate.

The stem should be long enough to grasp comfortably and so you can swirl the glass easily. (Holding the glass by the bowl doesn't just leave fingerprints; it can also warm the wine.) The stem shouldn't be so long so that the glass topples easily.



long enough for any lead to leach in. And in the last ten years, crystal manufacturers have greatly decreased the overall lead content in crystal.

The glass should give you room to move. If a wineglass is too small to swirl, the odds of spilling wine on yourself, on your tablecloth, and even on your date are pretty good, and what fun is that? You should never completely fill the glass, of course, but a good-size bowl gives you room to swirl, and it gives the wine room to show off its aromas.

The glass should feel balanced and comfortable in your hand, and it should feel stable when you set it down.

Basic wineglass shapes

Wineglasses tend to fall into a few major shapes. According to research by Georg Riedel, an Austrian glassmaker who has

thoroughly analyzed how wine acts in the glass, wine aromas stratify: wine's lightest, most fragile aromas are floral, fruity ones that stay near the rim. In the middle come green, earthy aromas. The heaviest aromas are wood and alcohol, which stay near the bottom.

Flutes are best for Champagne and other sparkling wines. The slender, attenuated bowl shows off a good sparkling wine's tiny bubbles as they leave thin, wispy trails, and the narrow opening focuses the delicate aromas of the wine. At all cost forego the sherbet-shaped affairs you see in 1940s movies set in swank Manhattan penthouses: those "saucer" glasses allow a sparkling wine's precious bubbles to dissipate all too quickly.

Tulip-shaped glasses work well with dry white wines, such as Sauvignon Blancs and

Chardonnays. Like the flute, a tulip's relatively straight sides accentuate both the nose and the fruit of a dry white wine. When you drink the wine, a tulip also leads it to land in a narrower area, at the tip of your tongue, which is where fruit flavors are best perceived.

Balloon-shaped glasses are for highlighting red Burgundy and other Pinot Noirs. Top-notch examples of these wines arguably possess the most delicate, complex, seductive aromas found in any wine, and this glass's rounded sides and generous shape give those aromas lots of room to develop. Also, drinking from a balloon glass requires more of a backward head tilt, which lets the wine land slightly further back on the tongue. It's a question of millimeters, but I find that a balloon glass deposits the wine at a place on your

tongue where areas in which you perceive fruit and herbal, earthy flavors start to merge.

Chimney-type glasses are right for full-bodied red wines such as red Bordeaux and other Cabernet Sauvignons. The large bowl and straighter sides focus the rich fruit flavors of a robust red wine while not overly accentuating the wood and tannins on the palate. (Most tannins are perceived at the back of the tongue, and a chimney glass places the wine at the front of your tongue so you're not overwhelmed by tannins.)

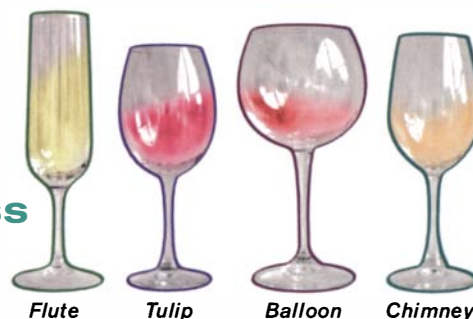
To simplify, choose an all-purpose wineglass

If you don't want your cupboards filled with a broad array

of stemware, your best move may be to choose a good all-purpose glass. (I taste a lot of wine for work and pleasure, and I own dozens of different wineglasses, but I tend to use the same glass nine times out of ten.) The most useful all-purpose wineglass combines the balloon and tulip shape and holds 12 to 15 ounces. With this hybrid, you can use the glass for a range of wines.

For my money, Riedel Crystal of Austria makes the finest stemware around, from high-end to inexpensive enough for everyday drinking. The glasses are delicate, but they bring out the most in any wine. Riedel's Overture series flute, white wine, and red wine are terrific, and they're reasonably priced

Basic wineglass shapes



(\$8.75 each). The Overture red wine is my favorite all-purpose glass, and I use it for everything from Sancerre to Zinfandel to digestifs.

Another good all-purpose glass for everything from delicate whites to robust reds is Spiegelau's red wineglass. The entire Spiegelau stemware line offers exceptional value. All the glasses are about \$10 each; I recommend them highly.

Schott-Zwiesel's Herald red and white wineglasses are

a great combination of sturdiness and elegance, and they sell for about \$7.50 each.

See Sources on p. 76 for where to buy wineglasses and for where to find more information on wineglass design.

Master Sommelier Tim Gaiser helped create the wine lists for Bix and The Cypress Club in San Francisco. He selects wine for VirtualVineyard.com, an online wine shop. ♦

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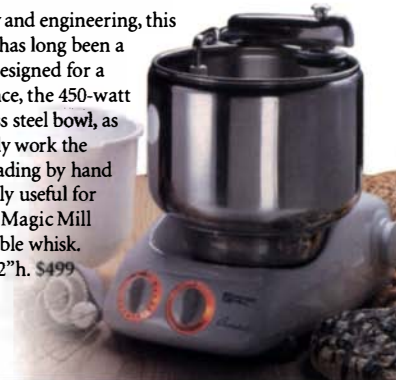
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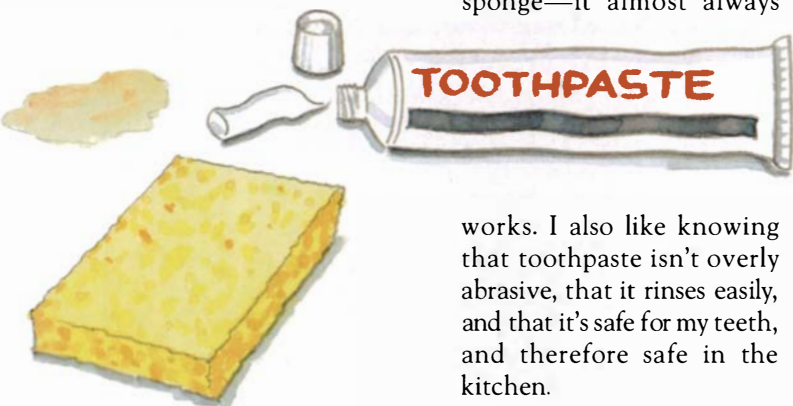
Get the most out of a piping bag

Whether I'm using a zip-top bag or a pastry bag to pipe out icing, ganache, or caramel sauce onto a dessert, I find that a dough scraper is the perfect tool for getting at the dregs that stick to the sides of the bag. The wide dull blade of the scraper forces every last bit down toward the hole—much more effective than using my fingers.

—Rose Levy Beranbaum,
author of *The Pie & Pastry Bible* (Scribner)

Toothpaste takes out tough stains

For stubborn stains on my countertops, pots, and pans, I rub out the stain with a dab of toothpaste on a soft, wet sponge—it almost always



A little dab'll do
for removing stains
on pots and counters.

works. I also like knowing that toothpaste isn't overly abrasive, that it rinses easily, and that it's safe for my teeth, and therefore safe in the kitchen.

—Ana Weerts,
Brookfield, WI

Stack shiitakes before cutting

When you have to slice a lot of shiitake mushrooms, the task will go a lot faster if you stack a few of them (after removing their stems) and then start the cutting.

—Kerry Burns,
Van Nuys, CA

Better mashed potatoes

I can't imagine mashed potatoes without butter, milk, and



Use a dough scraper to force the most out of a zip-top bag or a pastry bag.

snipped scallions. But I've recently discovered that an added generous spoonful of herb-and-garlic Rondelé cheese or of roasted-garlic cream cheese (now available in many markets) adds the ultimate touch for extra richness, creaminess, and flavor.

—Marcie Graham,
via e-mail

Cool hands on a cold baking sheet

Cool hands are essential for certain types of pastry work, for making pie crust or rolling out the centers of chocolate truffles, for example. My favorite trick for chilling my notoriously warm hands is to put a baking sheet in the freezer for 10 or 15 minutes. When I'm ready to work, I take out the very cold pan and periodically press my (dry) hands flat against it.

—Abigail Johnson Dodge,
Southport, CT

Labeling frozen foods changed my life

Everyone knows that you're supposed to label a bag or container of food with the date and contents before sticking it in the freezer, but I

never bothered to do it until I went to a stationery store and bought some white adhesive labels and put them in my silverware drawer along with a pen. At first it seemed like a hassle, but I've finally disciplined myself to go to the drawer before the freezer. I can't express the satisfaction I get from grabbing a container of unidentifiable something from the freezer and knowing definitively that it's "Lamb stew—3/12/99" or "Checkerboard cookie dough—5/26/99." If you're still not labeling your frozen foods, just do it.

—Carol Spinelli, Atlanta, GA

Make roasted garlic a kitchen staple

I have recently started substituting roasted garlic for raw in salad dressings, sauces, and marinades. I've come to prefer the mellowness of roasted garlic over the sharpness of raw.

Roast the head by cutting off the tips and sprinkling on a few teaspoons of water, along with salt and oil, if you like. Wrap the head in foil and roast in a hot oven until the cloves are soft, about an hour.

Then I refrigerate the garlic, wrapped in the cooking foil, and use it whenever I might have used raw. It lasts for at least a week.

—Jacquelyn Jacobi,
Victoria, British Columbia

Faster holes in bundt cake

The recipe for orange-soaked bundt cake in *Fine Cooking* #30 says to poke the cake about 100 places with a thin skewer. A faster way would be to use an angel food cake cutter. Back in the '60s, we called them what we used them for —afro picks—but of course, you don't need to wear your old love beads while doing the deed.

—Michael W. Wood,
San Jose, CA

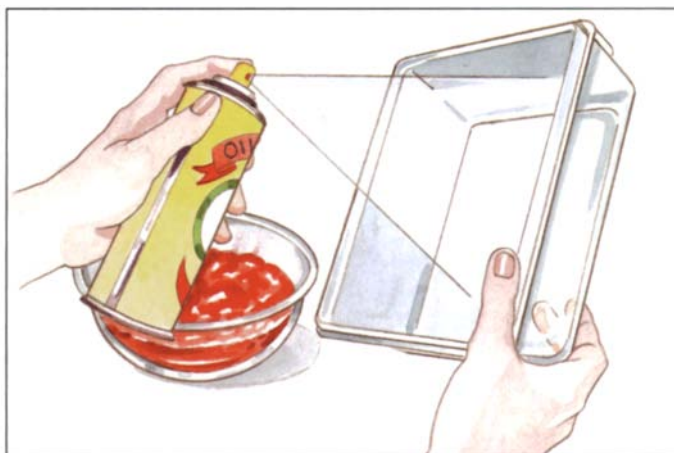
Film of oil keeps plastic from staining

Storing tomato-based soups or sauces, such as marinara sauce or chili, in a plastic container often leaves a red stain. I've found that if I lightly spray the container with cooking oil before pouring in the sauce, the container washes out like new.

—Elaine Kovacs,
Garland, TX

Buy steaks on sale and use them for hamburgers

To get the best ground beef for hamburgers, I take advantage of "value-pack" steaks. Most supermarkets sell packages of several steaks at a discount; sirloin and chuck are good cuts for burgers. I ask



To prevent stains, lightly coat plastic containers with cooking oil.

the butcher to trim the fat from these steaks and grind them for me. In this way, I'm assured that I'm buying freshly ground beef, and I know which cut it's from. Also, the burgers I get from

these steaks are far superior to any I've tasted from packaged ground beef, and it only costs me a few more pennies per pound.

—Antoinne von Rimes,
San Francisco, CA ♦

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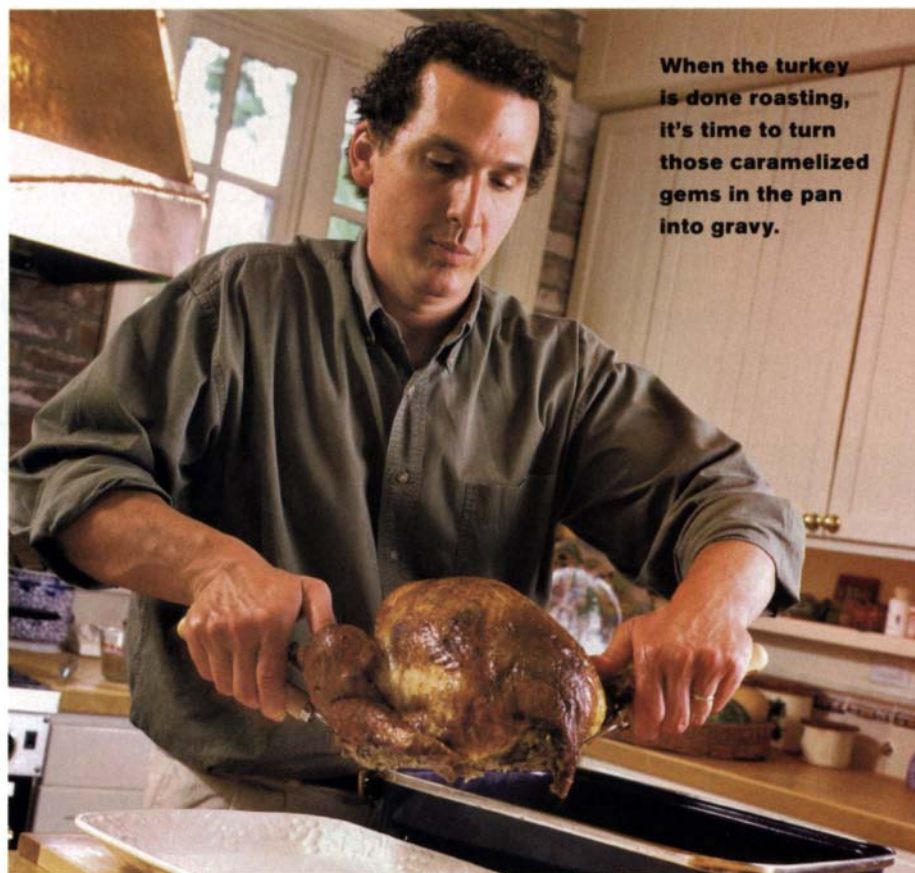
How to Intensify the Flavors of Your Thanksgiving Turkey

The stuffing, the gravy, and the skin offer three opportunities to pump up the flavor of your turkey dinner

BY GREG ATKINSON

In my view, the secret to moist, delicious turkey isn't in having a special roasting method but rather in finding ways to invest the bird with flavor.

In a way, a turkey is like a blank canvas, waiting to take on whatever palette of flavors you hand it. To create a really vibrant package, I take a three-pronged approach to my bird, making sure that each of the added components is truly packed with flavor. I start by rubbing the skin and inside cavity with sage, nutmeg, and pepper, an aromatic combination that transfers its volatile oils to the bird while releasing an uplifting fragrance into the kitchen. For the stuffing, I heighten interest with a few extra ingredients. For example, my sausage stuffing doesn't stop at bread, sausage, and the usual lineup of aromatic vegetables. For deeper flavor, I also add fresh thyme leaves, Marsala wine, and the turkey liver (don't worry, it's optional). And instead of making a gravy of just pan drippings, roux, and stock, I enrich the sauce even further by



whisking in Madeira or fresh herbs. These seemingly minor touches help elevate the turkey—and the whole meal—to something memorable and delicious, yet still traditional.

Since familiarity and comfort are important elements of the Thanksgiving meal, the two pairs of stuffing and gravy recipes I'm proposing take their cue from some cherished favorites. I do buck tradition on one point, though: I often bone the bird before stuffing it. It isn't really that difficult, and it makes carving a snap. If you're up for it, visit *Fine Cooking's* web

site (www.finecooking.com) for step-by-step instructions.

Choose the bird and season it well

Turkeys these days sport all sorts of confusing monikers on the label: self-basting, free range, or all natural. I always look for the word *natural*, which means the bird has been only minimally processed, in contrast to self-basting birds, which have been injected with oil or water. Free-range birds must be ordered ahead from natural food stores and some groceries, but in my experience they have been



Browned to perfection, this roasted turkey owes its rich color to a sage, nutmeg, and butter rub.

leaner and drier than the more readily available “natural” birds. (Formore about choosing a turkey, see Basics, p. 70.)

One more note about label reading: look for the words “includes giblets.” You’ll need those for making gravy.

As for size, I generally prefer smaller birds, mostly because larger ones won’t fit in my refrigerator. My rule of thumb is about one pound of turkey per person; if you want substantial seconds and leftovers, allow another half-pound per person. If you’re hosting a really big crowd and you have two ovens, consider roasting

two smaller birds instead of one large one. (This will also provide a good excuse to try two kinds of dressing.)

A heavy-duty roasting pan is ideal. Last year, I determined that my turkey warranted something more substantial than a disposable aluminum pan, so I invested in a sturdy 18x13-inch pan made of enameled steel and outfitted with easy-to-grasp handles. But with my boned and stuffed turkey installed in the pan for its maiden voyage, I discovered that the handles made the pan too wide for my oven. I retreated to the garage for a ham-

mer. After a few well-aimed strikes, the handles were “customized” and the pan fit beautifully. But if I had it to do over again, I’d measure before buying.

A roasting pan made of a heavy-weight metal helps ensure that the drippings don’t burn while the turkey roasts, and it gives better results when it comes time to deglaze the pan for making gravy. But if you don’t have one, don’t despair; the disposable aluminum ones will work.

Be liberal with the seasoning. I think that the most common mistake cooks make when roasting a turkey is using too



Season well. After rubbing the skin with melted butter or olive oil, season the bird generously inside and out with a fragrant blend of herbs and spices.



Stuff both cavities—the author prefers to use his hands. Extra dressing bakes off in a separate dish.

little salt and pepper. After rinsing the bird thoroughly and patting it dry, I rub it with melted butter or olive oil and I season it with plenty of coarse salt, freshly ground black pepper, nutmeg, and dried sage. Sweet-smelling nutmeg amplifies the aromatic qualities of everything else, and sage seems to bring out the homey goodness of poultry. The warmth of thyme is a viable option as well, and since my grandmother is allergic to sage, this is a frequent substitution in my family.

Dry, day-old bread makes light, moist stuffing

If I were to give in to my own nostalgic urges every year, we'd always have cornbread stuffing. I like the sweet, nutty flavor and the connotations of my boyhood home in the Deep South (I grew up in the Florida panhandle). But the truth is, I'm happy with any well-made stuffing, as long as it's moist and well seasoned.

Choose a good-quality bread, and buy it a couple of days in advance. I use a rustic *ciabatta* for the Italian sausage dressing, a bread that I'd just as soon eat plain as I would in a stuffing. French bread comes in all guises, from mediocre supermarket loaves that are empty of fla-

vor to excellent baguettes with crackly crusts and an irregular crumb. Obviously, go for the latter, if possible.

Thanksgiving is one event where it's okay to buy the bread a few days early because you want dry, stale bread for stuffing so it can stand up to the added moisture without getting mushy, as fresh bread would. You could also cube fresh bread several hours before making the stuffing and let the cubes air-dry at room temperature, or toast them briefly in a low oven.

The combination of black pepper, nutmeg, and sage promotes a mood akin to euphoria.

If you opt for cornbread stuffing, make your own cornbread a day or two ahead. You can whip it up in about a half hour. Cornbread crumbles easily, so I cut it up into fairly large cubes, which naturally crumble into smaller bits during mixing.

For springier breads that don't crumble, cut smaller cubes. When the cubes are too large, the dressing feels more like a hodgepodge of disparate ingredients and less like an ensemble. This

is especially the case for dry stuffings that lack a binding element, like eggs.

These recipes make a lot of stuffing because there never seems to be enough of it. (Who was it who said, "I don't want any more turkey, but I would like some more of that bread he ate"?!) About a third of the dressing will fit inside a 12- to 14-pound bird, and the rest can be cooked in a baking dish. While I don't shovel in the dressing as if I were filling a sausage casing, I also don't worry excessively about overpacking.

If you want to get a head start on the stuffing, you can cut up the bread, sauté the vegetables, and measure the seasonings in advance. To avoid soggy bread and spoilage, don't combine the bread with the liquid components until you're ready to stuff the bird. This is particularly important for dressings that are bound with eggs, like the cornbread stuffing.

Gravy: the final step before carving

No turkey dinner is complete without gravy. And for me, no turkey gravy is complete without a rich base of stock made from the giblets. The idea of giblet gravy may be off-putting to some, but I

strain out the giblets so they don't affect the texture. The stock is so simple to make, and the timing so well coordinated with roasting the turkey, that I find it hard to imagine skipping this step.

As flavorful as it is, stock is too light to stand alone as a base for gravy. For real intensity of flavor, you need to incorporate the pan drippings, those dark, caramelized juices on the bottom of the roasting pan. For really smooth gravy that isn't gummy, use a judicious hand with any thickeners and whisk constantly to avoid lumps. See the photos at right for two thickening methods. In general, I use one tablespoon of flour for every cup of liquid in a gravy.

RECIPES

Stuffed Roast Turkey

If you're using the cornbread stuffing, rub the bird with butter; for the Italian sausage stuffing, use oil. *Serves ten to twelve generously.*

FOR THE TURKEY:

12- to 14-lb. fresh turkey, with giblets
3 Tbs. melted unsalted butter or olive oil
2 Tbs. coarse salt
2 Tbs. dried sage
1 Tbs. freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. ground nutmeg
18 to 19 cups stuffing (recipes follow)
About 1 cup giblet stock (recipe follows)

To prepare and stuff the turkey—Heat the oven to 325°F. Remove the giblets and reserve them for giblet stock. Rinse and dry the turkey. Rub it inside and out with the butter or oil and then season with the salt, sage, pepper, and nutmeg. Loosely pack the central cavity and the hollow under the flap of skin at the top of the breast with 6 to 7 cups of the stuffing, tucking the flap under the bird. Spoon the remaining stuffing into a buttered or oiled baking dish, about 9x13 inches; cover and refrigerate.

Set the stuffed turkey in a large roasting pan, tucking the wings under the bird. (If your roasting pan has a rack, you can use it, but it's not essential.) Set the turkey in the oven to roast.

After 3 hours of roasting—Remove the extra stuffing from the fridge and douse it with about 1 cup giblet stock. Cover the dish with greased aluminum foil and bake with the turkey for 1 hour, uncovering the dish for the last 15 min. to brown the top.

The turkey is done when a meat thermometer inserted into a thigh registers 165°F and the juices from the thigh run clear, about 4 hours in all (18 to 20 min.

per pound for a stuffed bird). If the skin browns too much before the turkey is done, cover the bird loosely with foil. If the turkey fails to brown evenly or sufficiently, use a pastry brush to paint the skin with some of the brown juices in the roasting pan.

Remove the turkey from the oven, let it rest in the pan for 5 min., and then carefully transfer it to a platter. Tent loosely with foil and let it rest while you make the gravy, using one of the recipes that follow.

Giblet Stock

Reserve about a cup of this stock to moisten the stuffing before baking. Use the rest for making gravy. *Yields about 4 cups.*

1 Tbs. unsalted butter
Turkey giblets (excluding liver)
1 carrot, cut in 2-inch pieces
Peel and outer layers from 1 onion
Leafy tops of 3 or 4 ribs celery
1 bay leaf
3 or 4 whole cloves

As soon as the bird is in the oven, set a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat and melt the butter. Add the giblets (the neck, heart, and gizzard; reserve the liver for the sausage stuffing, if making) and stir until the giblets are browned, 7 to 10 min.

Add the carrot, onion, celery tops, bay leaf, and cloves. Cook until the vegetables begin to brown, about 5 min. Add 12 cups water, bring to a boil, and reduce the heat to low. Simmer, uncovered and undisturbed, until the liquid is reduced to about one-third its original volume, about 3 hours. If too much water evaporates and the giblets threaten to dry out, add more water. Strain into a measuring cup or bowl, pressing on the solids to extract all the liquid; you should have about 4 cups. Discard the solids.

Cornbread Stuffing

Yields about 18 cups, enough to fill a 12- to 14-pound turkey and a 9x13-inch baking dish. (Continued)

One way to thicken—a butter-flour paste



To thicken with a *beurre manié* (pronounced burr mahn-YAY), knead equal parts soft butter and flour into a smooth paste.



Bring strained giblet stock and defatted, deglazed pan drippings to a boil and whisk in the *beurre manié* a bit at a time.

Another starts with a fat and flour roux



To thicken with a roux (pronounced roo), put the fat reserved from the pan drippings in a pan over medium heat. Whisk in the flour.



When the roux just begins to turn blond, whisk in strained giblet stock and defatted, deglazed pan drippings.

8 Tbs. unsalted butter
 2 large yellow onions, cut into ¼-inch dice
 6 ribs celery, cut into ¼-inch dice
 4 large carrots, cut into ¼-inch dice
 4 large eggs
 2 Tbs. chopped fresh sage
 2 tsp. coarse salt
 2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
 18 cups day-old cornbread cut into 1-inch cubes (recipe follows)

In a large sauté pan set over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Add the onion, celery, and carrots and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are soft and are beginning to brown, 10 to 12 min. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool completely.

In a very large mixing bowl, beat the eggs and then stir in the sage, salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Stir in the sautéed vegetables and the cornbread.

Cornbread

If you don't have a jelly roll pan, you can bake the cornbread in muffin tins or a 9x13-inch baking pan, lengthening the cooking time to 20 to 25 minutes. *Yields enough for 18 cups of cubed cornbread.*

2 cups all-purpose flour
 2 cups cornmeal
 2 Tbs. baking powder
 2 tsp. salt
 2 large eggs
 1 cup packed brown sugar
 ⅔ cup vegetable oil
 2 cups milk

Heat the oven to 400°F. Generously oil a 12x17-inch jelly roll pan. In a very large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. In a



Cornbread crumbles quite naturally during mixing so a quick scoring in the baking pan is all it needs.



Mangia, mangia! Rustic *ciabatta* bread and Marsala wine highlight the Italian side of this hearty sausage stuffing.

medium bowl, whisk the eggs with the brown sugar and vegetable oil until the mixture is smooth; whisk in the milk.

Add the milk mixture all at once to the cornmeal mixture and whisk quickly until just combined; don't overmix. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean, 12 to 15 min. Cool the cornbread in the pan for 10 min., cut it into 1-inch cubes, and let it finish cooling in the pan.

Italian Bread & Sausage Stuffing

Yields about 19 cups, enough to fill a 12- to 14-pound turkey and a 9x13-inch baking dish.

14 cups Italian bread, like *ciabatta*, cut into ½- to ¾-inch cubes (about 3 loaves)
 ⅓ cup olive oil
 2 lb. bulk sweet Italian sausage (or stuffed sausage, casings removed)
 1 turkey liver, finely chopped (optional)
 2 large yellow onions, cut into ¼-inch dice
 5 large ribs celery, cut into ¼-inch dice
 8 cloves garlic, finely chopped
 1 Tbs. plus 1 tsp. fresh thyme leaves (or 1½ tsp. dried)
 1 Tbs. dried sage
 1½ tsp. coarse salt
 ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
 1 cup sweet Marsala wine

Pile the bread cubes into a very large mixing bowl and set aside. Set a large sauté pan over medium heat and add the

olive oil, half of the sausage, and the chopped turkey liver (if using). Cook, breaking up the sausage with a wooden spoon or spatula into ½- to 1-inch bits, until light brown, about 5 min. With a slotted spoon, transfer the sausage to the bowl of cubed bread; repeat with the remaining sausage. In the fat left in the pan, sauté the onions, celery, and garlic until the onions are translucent and just beginning to brown, 8 to 10 min. Stir in the thyme, sage, salt, and pepper, cook 1 min., and then add the mixture to the cubed bread.

With the pan off the heat, carefully pour in the Marsala. Keep your face away from the pan as the wine will sputter. (It's unlikely that Marsala will ignite, but if it does, just back off and let it burn for a few seconds until the alcohol has cooked off.) Set the pan over medium heat and bring the liquid to a boil, stirring to scrape up any flavorful bits in the pan. Boil for 2 min. and then add the Marsala to the bread mixture; stir until well combined. Taste and add salt and pepper if needed.

Madeira Gravy

This gravy pairs wonderfully with cornbread stuffing. *Yields about 4 cups.*

Pan drippings from roast turkey
 2½ to 2¾ cups giblet stock (see the recipe on p. 29)
 1 cup Madeira wine
 ¼ cup all-purpose flour
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

After removing the turkey from the roasting pan, tilt the pan so the pan juices collect in one corner (don't try to scrape the browned nubbins stuck to the pan; you'll get to those later). Pour all the drippings into a large (4-cup) measuring cup and leave undisturbed until the fat rises to the top, about 5 min.

Pour or spoon off $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the risen fat, put it in a large saucepan, and set the pan aside. Spoon off and discard as much of the remaining fat as you can, carefully reserving all the pan juices underneath. Add enough giblet stock to the juices to make 3 cups; set aside.

Set the roasting pan over medium-high heat. When it's hot, carefully pour in the Madeira, scraping up the nubbins in the pan. Keep your face away from the pan as the wine will sputter. (It's unlikely that Madeira will ignite, but if it does, just back off and let it burn for a few seconds until the alcohol has cooked off.) Bring to a boil, simmer for 5 min., and then strain this liquid into the measuring cup with the giblet stock mixture; you should have about 4 cups.

Set the saucepan with the turkey fat over medium-high heat and whisk in the flour. When the flour just starts to turn blond, after about 2 min., whisk in the stock and Madeira mixture in a slow stream; continue whisking until the mixture is smooth. Simmer gently for 5 min. and then season to taste with salt and pepper.

Reduce the heat to low and keep the gravy warm until everything else is on the table.

Pan Gravy with Herbs

This classic pan gravy, thickened with a *beurre manié* and spiked with herbs, goes well with any roast turkey and stuffing combination. If you're matching it to the Italian sausage dressing, be sure to use fresh thyme in the gravy. *Yields about $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups.*

Pan drippings from roast turkey
About 3 cups giblet stock (see the recipe on p. 29)

4 Tbs. unsalted butter, at room temperature



Cornbread stuffing and Madeira gravy add a sweet, nutty flavor. This "double-breasted" slice of turkey is a result of boning the bird before roasting.

4 Tbs. all-purpose flour

About $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped mixed fresh herbs (chives, chervil, parsley, thyme, marjoram) or 1 Tbs. mixed dried herbs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

After removing the turkey from the roasting pan, tilt the pan so the pan juices collect in one corner (don't try to scrape up the browned nubbins stuck to the pan; you'll get to those later). Pour all the juices into a large (4-cup) measuring cup and leave undisturbed so the fat rises to the top. Pour off and discard as much of the fat as you can, carefully reserving all the pan juices underneath.

Set the roasting pan over medium-high heat; when it's hot, pour in about 1 cup of giblet stock and scrape up the nubbins in the pan. Strain this liquid into the cup with the pan drippings. Add the remaining 2 cups stock; you should have about $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups. Pour the mixture into a medium saucepan and bring to a boil.

Meanwhile, knead the butter and flour together to make a smooth paste (called a *beurre manié*) and then whisk the paste, a few pieces at a time, into the boiling mixture until the gravy reaches a consistency that you like. You might not need to use all of the *beurre manié*. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for 5 min. to cook off any floury taste. Stir in the herbs and season with salt and pepper to taste. Reduce the heat to low and keep the gravy warm until everything else is on the table.

Greg Atkinson is the executive chef at Canlis restaurant in Seattle. ♦



wine choices

Here's what wine people and chefs like to drink with turkey

When it comes to choosing wine for Thanksgiving dinner, options are as varied as the guests at your table. I checked in with chefs and wine people to see what they'll be drinking this year.

"Anything goes with turkey," says Tim Gaiser, a master sommelier. When pressed for a personal favorite, he named Aries or Carneros Pinot Noir by Robert Sinskey (California) or Fiddlehead Pinot Noir from Oregon, which he says are all turkey-

friendly because of their "pretty, soft, ripe fruit, with smooth tannins and a touch or more of earthiness."

"It's pretty hard to go wrong with turkey," agrees Karen MacNeil, chair of the wine education program at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in the Napa Valley. For the "humble flavors of Thanksgiving dinner," chances are MacNeil will be drinking Fife Zinfandel (which happens to be made by her husband) for its hearty,

homey qualities. She also likes Lolonis, De Loach, and Ridge Zinfandels with turkey.

"Don't forget the dressing or side dishes," cautions Kermit Lynch, a wine merchant and writer who says that "almost any wine except tannic, clunky red works with turkey." Lynch told me he always serves a slightly cool Beaujolais at Thanksgiving because he likes the Gamay grape's "festive, fruity aromas." This year, he'll pour 1998 Côte de Brouilly from Château Thivin,

and then Pinot Noir, "a big, gnarly old Mazis-Chambertin from Domaine Maume."

"German or Alsace Rieslings," says Jody Adams, the chef-owner of Rialto and Red Clay in the Boston area. "Thanksgiving tends to be a rich meal, and the lively acid in those wines provides good balance. And they're fruity enough to go with the sweeter stuff on the table."

Amy Albert is an associate editor for Fine Cooking.

The Sweet & Savory Sides of Winter Squash

A walnut-crumb topping brings out the nutty flavor of squash in this creamy Parmesan, butternut, and potato gratin.



Winter squash roasted with maple syrup and orange juice is a savory base for a sweet Brown Sugar Squash Pie.

Learn to highlight the flavors of winter squash in gratins, pastas, salads, and pies

BY RIS LACOSTE

Mother Nature is a pretty smart cookie. She gives us the green vegetables of spring—asparagus, peas, and artichokes—when you can practically taste the grass and smell the dew. The blazing sun of summer brings the fiery reds and yellows of tomatoes, corn, peppers, and summer squash. And then those reds and yellows mellow into the sweet golden orange of fall. The leaves begin to turn, the days grow shorter, the air is cool and prime for football, and you just know the bright-orange pumpkins are out there in the patch, waiting

Photos except where noted: Martha Holmberg

Master method for roasting squash to use as a versatile base



Ris Lacoste puts seeded (unpeeled) squash halves on a rimmed baking sheet. She rubs the flesh with softened butter, seasons with salt and pepper, drizzles with orange juice and maple syrup, and flips them over.

to be picked. That's when I know I'm ready to put winter squash on my menu at 1789 Restaurant in Washington, D.C.

I try to follow the seasons when making my restaurant menus, mostly because flavors are at their best but also because I like to keep my cooking in sync with local rhythms. When vegetables are eaten in season, their nutrients are at a peak. And when it comes to winter squash, that genius Mother Nature makes cooking seasonally especially easy. With its sweet, nutty flavor, squash lends itself perfectly to the meats of autumn—duck, venison, pork, turkey—all of which love to have a little something sweet beside them. And squash has a savory side, too, which makes it a versatile vegetable in the fall. I use my favorite varieties (see the sidebar on p. 36) in dishes as diverse as gratins, pastas, salads, and bread puddings. My pastry chef loves winter squash in pies, too. The possibilities are endless, provided you first learn to baby squash a bit so it releases all its potential.

Roast to enhance flavor; then use it as a base

While winter squash can be steamed, sautéed, or microwaved, I prefer to roast squash whenever possible, especially before using it in other dishes calling for squash purée (see the master method, above). Roasting helps reduce the moisture level (winter squash is 89% water), which intensifies the flavor and also gives me the opportunity to season the



The squash roasts in a 400°F oven for 40 to 45 minutes, until the skin is blistered and browned and the flesh is tender; lift the squash with tongs and poke with a paring knife to check. When cooled, the skin will peel off easily.



To evaporate moisture and concentrate flavor, as for a ravioli filling, the roasted squash (and any cooking juices) may be sautéed in a dry pan for a few minutes.

squash while cooking it. After cutting small squash in half or larger squash in pieces, I season it with maple syrup to enhance sweetness, orange juice to heighten flavors, and butter to add richness.

I roast the squash in a baking pan or on a rimmed baking sheet flesh side down, which allows the most flesh to caramelize. I never peel squash before roasting it—when raw, squash is notoriously difficult to peel, but when cooked, the flesh is easy to scrape out.

Once the squash is cooked, cooled, and separated from the skin, it's a terrific base for soups, puddings, pies, breads, biscuits, or ravioli filling. The cooked squash has a much creamier texture than you'd expect from a fibrous vegetable. It also reheats beautifully and freezes well. I like to freeze it in serving sizes to use later in a variety of recipes or as a side dish.

If I want to use well-defined squash pieces in a recipe, like in a pot pie or in the salad on p. 35, I'll first peel it and then dice, slice, or julienne the raw squash and roast or sauté it just until done. I never boil squash, as its delicate flavor would be lost.

Squash's subtleties need the right seasoning

The sweet and savory sides of winter squash both benefit from subtle flavor boosts. Traditional au-



Making squash ravioli “assembly-line” style is quick and easy. To avoid air pockets, seal the ravioli by pressing down around the filling first and then sealing the edges.

turn and winter spices like cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, and ginger are a good place to start, but there are smoother ways to highlight the delicate flavors of squash.

I like to focus on the two major characteristics of winter squash flavor—sweet and nutty. Sweetness balances spicy food. You go to the sweetness on a plate for soothing refreshment—when eating a spicy curry, for instance. A roasted sweet dumpling squash is fabulous filled with a curried rice mixture and topped with yogurt. Sweetness also balances smokiness; just think of bacon and maple syrup, or ham and pineapple. Bacon, prosciutto, sausages, and ham of all kinds match very well with squash. You can add squash to lentil or bean soups. And squash works very well with truly savory flavors such as tomatoes and sharp, salty cheeses (see the gratin recipe on p. 36).

The other side of squash—its nutty flavor—helps it bond with buttery recipes, baked goods, and rice. Wild rice, basmati rice—even risotto—all have a nutty side to them. I especially like walnuts with winter squash, but pecans are a bit sweeter and work well, too. Try pistachios and almonds in a curry dish with winter squash. And the nutty side of squash also makes sherry and bourbon great partners for it, as these spirits have their own sweetness and a special affinity to nuts. Plus, they’re great flavor heighteners. In the squash ravioli recipe included here, I’ve dressed the ravioli with a sherried onion cream sauce, crunchy walnuts, tart-sweet cranberries, and salty Parmesan cheese—all to bring out the range of squash flavors.



A silky sherry-onion cream sauce, crunchy walnuts, sweet dried cranberries, and salty Parmesan shards bring complementary flavors and textures to Butternut Squash Ravioli.

RECIPES

Squash Ravioli with Sherried Onion Sauce, Walnuts & Cranberries

My sous chef Michelle Giroux developed this delicious dish as a vegetarian entrée for our menu, but it would also make an elegant Thanksgiving starter. We make our own pasta dough, but wonton wrappers (or “pasta wraps”), found in the grocery produce section, give excellent results and are quick and easy to work with. *Yields about 40 ravioli.*

FOR THE FILLING:

- 1 large or 2 small butternut squash or ½ cheese pumpkin (2½ lb. total), to yield 2½ cups cooked purée**
- 5 to 6 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**
- ⅓ cup maple syrup or 2 Tbs. brown sugar**
- ¼ cup orange juice**
- ¼ cup ricotta**
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper**

FOR THE SAUCE:

- 2 large onions (14 to 16 oz. total), thinly sliced**
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter; more if needed**
- ⅓ cup dry sherry**
- 1½ cups heavy cream**
- 1½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken or vegetable stock (or a total of 3 cups stock if not using cream)**
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh sage**

TO ASSEMBLE THE RAVIOLI:

- Cornmeal for dusting**
- 80 wonton wrappers (“pasta wraps”)**
- 2 eggs mixed with a dash of water**

FOR THE GARNISH:

- ½ cup finely chopped toasted walnuts**
- ½ cup finely chopped dried cranberries**
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh chives**
- 3 oz. Parmesan cheese, shaved with a vegetable peeler into shards**

To make the filling—Follow the master method for roasting squash (p. 33) using the amounts for the squash, butter, maple syrup, and orange juice above. After peeling the cooked squash, put the flesh and any

juices from roasting into a large heavy-based sauté pan and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, about 10 min., to further dry out the mixture and intensify the flavor. To smooth out the squash somewhat, break up lumps with a spatula, a potato masher, or the back of a wooden spoon. Put the squash in a bowl and set aside until cool. When cooled, mix in the ricotta and grated cheese and season with salt and pepper. The mixture can be made a day ahead, covered, and refrigerated.

To make the sauce—Sauté the onions in 3 Tbs. of the butter over medium heat until very soft and golden, 20 to 25 min. Add the sherry to deglaze, raise the heat to medium high, and cook until all the liquid is evaporated. Add the cream and stock (or all stock, if you prefer) and the chopped sage, and reduce by half or until the sauce is the consistency you like. You'll have 2 to 2½ cups sauce. Season with salt and pepper. If using stock only, whisk in 1 to 2 Tbs. butter at the end to give the sauce a bit of body. (If making the sauce ahead, reserve the butter until reheating. If using cream, reheat the sauce very gently.)

To assemble the ravioli—Lightly dust your work surface with cornmeal, lay out the wonton wrappers (10 to 12 at a time) and brush half of them with egg wash. Place 1 scant Tbs. of the squash filling in the center of each piece of egg-washed pasta and flatten slightly (a pastry bag works well here). Quickly and

gently cover each with a second wrapper (without egg wash) and with the tips of your fingers, press tightly around each mound and out towards the edges of the pasta to create a tight seal. (Start pressing around the filling first to avoid creating air pockets). If you like, trim the ravioli with a cookie cutter or knife. (Alternatively, if using homemade pasta sheets, space the filling 3 inches apart on first sheet, cover, seal, and crimp as desired). Arrange the filled ravioli in a single layer on a sheet pan lightly dusted with cornmeal. Cover and refrigerate or freeze until ready to use.

To cook and serve the ravioli—Warm the sauce and have the garnishes ready. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil, add a touch of olive oil, and drop in 4 to 6 ravioli at a time. When they rise to the surface, boil for 4 min. and then remove them with a slotted spoon and transfer them to a strainer (or a cooling rack set over a pan) to drain. Arrange 3 or 4 ravioli on a large plate for an appetizer (6 for a dinner portion), cover lightly with the sauce (about 1 Tbs. per ravioli), and sprinkle with the walnuts, cranberries, and chives. Add a few shards of Parmesan and serve.

Roasted Butternut Squash Salad with Sherry Maple Vinaigrette

If you can find it, try the Westfield Farm goat cheese from Hubbardston, Massachusetts, in this salad. I like to include the optional bacon because I think its meaty smokiness adds great contrast. *Serves six as a starter.*

(Continued)

Handle squash safely

Squash skin is very tough, and it can be a struggle to cut. To keep things safe, work on a flat surface and, to secure a solid base, trim a sliver from the bottom or one side of the squash and let it sit flat. Use a large, sharp knife and keep your fingers out of the way. Insert the tip of the knife into the side of the squash and cut down, rather than attacking the squash with the full breadth of the blade.

I usually don't peel any squash other than butternut because the contours are so unruly. When peeling butternut, you can use a vegetable peeler, but you might want to wear gloves, as there's a green, gluey substance under the skin that gets on your hands and seems to stay there forever.



Roast diced squash and sliced onions to use in a warm salad. Give them a quick stir halfway through roasting.



Salad gets a sweet and savory treatment with roasted squash, port-soaked raisins, and a maple vinaigrette.

½ cup raisins
 ½ cup port
 1 butternut squash (about 2 lb.)
 1 small red onion
 2 Tbs. olive oil
 2 Tbs. maple syrup
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 2 medium heads endive
 1 small head frisée
 ½ small head radicchio
 3 cups loosely packed spinach leaves, stemmed
Sherry Maple Vinaigrette (see recipe at right)
 6-oz. log fresh goat cheese
 ⅓ cup chopped toasted walnuts
 4 slices cooked bacon, crumbled (optional)



Acorn squash



Butternut



Hubbard



Cheese squash



Sweet dumpling



Sugar pumpkin

Cover the raisins with the port and let sit overnight.

Heat the oven to 400°F. Cut off the bulb end of the squash; reserve for another use. Peel the cylinder end and cut into ½- to ¾-inch dice. Thinly slice the red onion. In a bowl, combine the squash, red onion, olive oil, and maple syrup. Season with salt and pepper and toss to combine thoroughly. Spread the squash and onions on an oiled sheet pan and roast, stirring occasionally, until the squash is just cooked through and the squash and onions are browned, 20 to 25 min.

Cut the endive into ½-inch slices. Cut off the stem end of the frisée, separate the leaves, and cut them into smaller pieces. Core and roughly chop the radicchio. Combine the endive, frisée, radicchio, and spinach in a nonreactive mixing bowl; toss with ½ cup of the vinaigrette. Arrange the greens on six plates.

Heat the broiler. Slice the goat cheese into 6 rounds and arrange on a baking sheet. Broil until just soft, 2 to 3 min. Top each plate of greens with the still-warm squash and onions. Drain the raisins and sprinkle them, the toasted walnuts, and the bacon, if using, around the plate. Garnish with a round of warmed goat cheese. Drizzle a few teaspoons of the remaining vinaigrette around each plate and serve. Reserve extra vinaigrette for another use.

Sherry Maple Vinaigrette

You can use walnut oil for some of the peanut oil. Yields about 1½ cups.

⅓ cup sherry vinegar
 1 tsp. Dijon-style mustard
 2 Tbs. maple syrup
 1 Tbs. finely chopped shallots
 1 cup peanut oil
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Combine the vinegar, mustard, maple syrup, and shallots in a bowl and slowly whisk in the oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Butternut Squash & Potato Gratin with Walnut Crust

To vary this gratin, add tomatoes, caramelized onions, or other vegetables. It's wise to put a sheet of foil on the bottom rack of the oven to catch any cream that bubbles over. Serves nine.

1 butternut squash (about 2 lb.), peeled
 2 Idaho potatoes (about 1¼ lb. total), peeled
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 6 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese
 1 cup heavy cream
 ½ cup finely chopped walnuts
 ½ cup fresh breadcrumbs combined with 2 Tbs. melted butter

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8x8-inch (2-qt.) glass or ceramic baking dish. Cut the squash in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds and fibers. Slice the squash and potatoes about ⅛ inch thick (use a mandoline if you have one). Line the bottom of the baking dish with a layer of squash (overlapping slightly), season lightly with salt and pepper, sprinkle with a little of the Parmesan, and drizzle with a little of the cream. Cover with a layer of potato slices, season with salt, pepper, cheese, and cream. Repeat with the remaining squash and potatoes until the dish is full, ending with a

Squash have different looks, different personalities

Over the years, I've played around with many winter squash varieties. Here's a list of favorites, based purely on flavor.

In my opinion, **acorn squash** is the best squash to just bake and eat; the flesh is golden yellow, dry, and sweet, with a definable but pleasant texture. **Butternut** squash is very versatile and easy to handle. Its orange flesh is thick, dry, fine-grained, and sweet. Because of its density and ease of preparation, butternut is the squash to use when you want to dice or slice or present squash in any form other than a purée or a roasted chunk. **Hubbard** squash is often sold in pieces because it can grow to

cumbersome sizes. This popular New England squash usually has a gorgeous, gray-blue shell, with a fine-grained flesh that's dry, somewhat mealy, and very flavorful. It's perfect for pies. A current favorite of mine is an heirloom squash called a **cheese squash** (or cheese pumpkin). It resembles an old-fashioned flattened cheese box. It's a good-size squash with tan skin, thick, deep-orange flesh, a coarse texture, and a really sweet flavor. **Sweet dumplings** are tiny but great for roasting and presenting whole. **Sugar pumpkins** are good for pies, too, as well as for canning since they have a thick, fine-grained flesh.

Stay away from *pumpkin* pumpkins, whether they're the classic field type or the original French variety. Carve them, but don't eat them: they're tough and bland.

Experiment with any new varieties you come across. I love it when my purveyor, Tuscarora Organic Coop in Pennsylvania, delivers a variety of new and interesting winter squash to my door. I like to bake them all and compare them for flavor and texture. You can do the same when serving a wedge of roasted squash as a simple side to roast duck, turkey breast, or pork loin. Pick a few different types at your local farmers' market and see which one is indeed your favorite.



For a gratin, alternate layers of squash and potato, drizzling cream and sprinkling Parmesan in between.



Press gently on the completed layers to distribute the cream evenly.

top layer of squash, seasoned and topped with any remaining cheese and cream. (You may have extra squash.) Press down lightly to distribute the cream and compact the layers. The last layer of squash should be just sitting in the cream, but not covered by it. Cover the dish with foil and bake until the vegetables feel tender when poked with a thin, sharp knife (check the middle layer), about 1 hour and 10 min.

Combine the walnuts and buttered breadcrumbs. Remove the gratin from the oven, sprinkle with the breadcrumb-nut mixture, and bake until the top is lightly browned, 5 to 10 min. Let sit in a warm place for 20 min. before serving so that liquids will set and tighten the gratin. Cut into 9 squares and serve.

Brown Sugar Squash Pie

This pie is a favorite of my pastry chef, Terri Horn. She likes to use the best ingredients she can—farm-fresh squash and high butterfat cream. She recommends eating this pie within a day of making it as the custard filling makes the pie soggy after that. *Serves eight.*

FOR THE SQUASH PUREE:

- 2 to 2½ lb. Hubbard or butternut squash, to yield 2 cups purée**
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened**
- 2 Tbs. firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- 3 Tbs. orange juice**

FOR THE CUSTARD:

- ½ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- 3 large eggs**
- ½ cup heavy cream**
- ½ tsp. ground allspice**
- ½ tsp. ground ginger**
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon**
- ½ tsp. salt**

FOR THE PIE:

- 1 unbaked 9-inch *pâte brisée* pie shell, chilled (see the recipe at right)**
- Pie leaves or other decorations, baked separately (optional)**

To make the squash purée—Follow the directions for the master method for roasting squash (p. 33), using the purée ingredients above. Put the cooked and cooled squash in a food processor and purée until

smooth. For a very smooth consistency, put the purée through a food mill as well. Measure out 2 cups.

To make the custard and bake the pie—Set an oven rack on the lowest position and heat the oven to 375°F. Combine the purée with the brown sugar, eggs, cream, spices, and salt and whisk until smooth. Pour the mixture into the pie shell and bake until the custard is puffed up but still has a small wet spot in the middle, 50 to 60 min. Let cool a bit before serving. Garnish with separately baked pie decorations if you like.

Pâte Brisée

Once the shell is made, it can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated up to 24 hours before filling and baking. This recipe makes more dough than you'll need for the squash pie. Save the extra to use for pie decorations or a small tart. *Yields 17¾ ounces.*

- 9 oz. (2 cups) all-purpose flour**
- ¾ tsp. salt**
- ¾ tsp. sugar**
- 6 oz. (12 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- ¼ cup ice water**

In a food processor, combine the flour, salt, and sugar and pulse once or twice. Toss in the cubes of butter and coat lightly with the flour mixture. Process just until the texture is pebbly. With the motor running, add the ice water through the feed tube just until the dough begins to form a ball. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and shape into a ball, kneading once or twice if necessary. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before rolling.

When the dough is chilled, reserve one-quarter of it for any decorations. Roll the remaining three-quarters into a round between ⅛ and ¼ inch thick. Transfer to a 9-inch pie plate and crimp and shape the edges. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

To make pie decorations—Roll the remaining pie dough ¼ inch thick. Use a small cookie cutter or a paring knife to cut out shapes. Set on a parchment-lined baking sheet, sprinkle with sugar, and bake at 350°F until lightly browned, about 12 min. Let cool.



Finish cooking the gratin uncovered to brown the breadcrumb-walnut topping.

Ris Lacoste is the award-winning executive chef of 1789 Restaurant in Washington, D.C. ♦

For More Flavorful, Meaty

As convenient as a chicken breast, but more tender, juicy, and versatile

BY JOANNE WEIR

When it comes to chicken, we are a nation obsessed with the breast, especially the boneless, skinless variety. Now, I'm not anti-breast—it's certainly quick, easy, and versatile. But if it's flavor you're after, look to the thigh. Chicken thighs have more chicken flavor and a smooth, almost silken texture, and they cost less than breasts. And nowadays, you can even find them conveniently packaged boneless and skinless.


Chicken thighs can do everything chicken breasts can do and more. You can grill and sauté them just like breasts, but their superiority is most apparent in stews and braises, where long, moist cooking can easily overcook and toughen the more delicate breast meat. And, unlike legs and wings, which can contain gristle and sinew, thighs have large sections of easily accessible, tender meat.

Trim always; skin with restraint

Bone-in, skin-on thighs are a staple in every butcher case. For many recipes, I prefer to leave both skin and bone intact, as in a dinner made from crispy pan-fried thighs (see the photo opposite), for example, or the broiled coconut-lime thighs on p. 41. The skin protects the thigh meat so it doesn't dry out in high heat. I also like the bone in and the skin on for stews and braises; the bones add flavor and if you brown the thighs in the pan first, you'll add tons of flavor to the sauce. In most recipes, the fat rendered from the skin is poured off, but you still



Chicken, Try the Thigh



Boneless thighs cook quickly in a Thai-inspired sauce that's then reduced until it's irresistibly sticky and savory.

may need to degrease the dish before serving it.

Even if you're leaving the skin on, you'll want to trim any skin that extends farther than the edges of the chicken thigh. This is also the time to remove any excess fat from the underside of the thigh. Use a small, sharp knife and a cutting-scraping action to pull the fat away from the meat. For recipes that call for skinless meat, all it takes is a good strong tug to remove the thick skin.

Boneless thighs work best in quick-cooked dishes. At many markets, you can buy thighs already boned, or you can do it yourself by following the photos and captions on p. 40. (One benefit of boning them yourself, aside from the fact that bone-in thighs cost less, is that you can save the bones and use them for home-made chicken stock.)

A boneless chicken thigh gives you the same ease of cooking and preparation as a boneless chicken breast but with more

flavor and less of a chance of drying out during cooking. To see for yourself, make your favorite chicken breast recipe but prepare it half with breasts and half with thighs. Take a bite of each and compare. Boneless thighs can also be cut into small pieces for stir-fries, kebabs, and fajitas.

A fully cooked thigh can look pink

If you're used to cooking white meat, the tricky thing is to remember that dark meat cooks darker. Breast meat clearly changes color (from pink to white) when fully cooked, but thighs look pinkish-brown even when thoroughly cooked.

To test for doneness, I press the meat of the thigh. There should be a good amount of resistance. If the meat is mushy, the thigh is undercooked. If you stick a skewer or small knife into the thickest part of the chicken thigh and the juices run clear, the thigh is done. You can also use a small knife to cut into the thickest part of the thigh towards the bone. If there's no sign



As simple as it gets with chicken thighs. Searing and then steaming thighs crisps the skin but keeps the meat moist. Heat a tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat. Add the chicken thighs—trimmed of excess skin and fat—skin side down while shaking the pan (to keep them from sticking). Cover the pan and cook until the skin is browned, about 10 minutes. Flip, cover, and cook another 10 minutes. Flip again, season with salt and pepper, and cook uncovered until done, about another 10 minutes.

of red toward the bone, the thigh is done. Finally, use a meat thermometer for the most accurate test; it should read 170°F for fully cooked chicken. You can even go as high as 180°F because juicy thighs can stand up to a little overcooking without becoming unbearably dry. (Just try that with a breast.)

RECIPES

Sweet & Spicy Sticky Chicken

This dish, full of Asian flavors, is best served with plenty of steamed jasmine rice and sautéed snap peas. Look for fish sauce in the Asian section of your grocery store or at an Asian market. *Serves four.*

½ cup dark brown sugar
¼ cup fish sauce

⅓ cup water
3 Tbs. rice-wine vinegar
2 Tbs. soy sauce
1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
1 clove garlic, minced
½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
1 Tbs. peanut or vegetable oil
3 scallions (white and green parts), thinly sliced
8 chicken thighs (bone in or boneless), fat and skin removed
Cilantro sprigs as a garnish

In a bowl, whisk together the brown sugar, fish sauce, water, rice-wine vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, garlic, black pepper, and crushed red chile flakes.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the scallions and cook until soft, about 3 min. Add the thighs and the brown sugar mixture. Turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. As soon as it comes to a boil, reduce the heat to low

and simmer, turning the thighs occasionally, until cooked, 25 to 30 min.

Remove the thighs from the pan and cover with foil to keep warm. Increase the heat to high and reduce the sauce by half or until it is slightly thickened and resembles a bubbling caramel sauce. Serve the chicken with the sauce, garnished with the cilantro sprigs.

Braised Chicken Thighs with Autumn Vegetables

Serve this hearty stew in a bowl to best enjoy the sauce. *Serves six.*

2 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 slice bacon, cut into ½-inch squares
12 chicken thighs (bone in, skin on), excess skin and fat removed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 medium onion, chopped
1¼ cups dry white wine
5 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
1 Tbs. tomato paste
3 bay leaves
½ tsp. chopped fresh thyme
2 parsnips (about 6 oz.), peeled and cut into 1-inch lengths
3 medium carrots (about 8 oz.), peeled and cut into 1-inch lengths
12 Brussels sprouts (about 8 oz.), trimmed
12 pearl onions, peeled (optional)
1½ Tbs. all-purpose flour
1 Tbs. coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley

In a large, heavy, flameproof casserole over medium heat, melt 1 Tbs. of the butter. Add the bacon and cook until light golden, about 10 min. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Increase the heat to medium high and arrange the chicken thighs, skin side down, in a single layer with space between them. (You may have to do this in two batches.) Season with salt and pepper and cook until light golden, about 5 min. per side. Remove the chicken and pour off all but 1 Tbs. of the fat from the pan. Turn the heat to medium, add the chopped onion, and cook until soft, about 5 min.

Increase the heat to medium high. Return the chicken and bacon to the pan. Add the wine, stock, tomato paste, bay leaves, and thyme. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer until the chicken is cooked through, about 15 min.

Remove the chicken from the pan, cover with foil, and set aside. Add the parsnips, carrots, Brussels sprouts, and pearl onions (if using), to the stock. Cover and cook until the vegetables are tender, 10 to 15 min. With a slotted spoon, remove the vegetables from the pan. Turn

Bone your own chicken thighs



1 With the thigh skin side down, slide a sharp knife along the bone. Use the two diagonal strips of fat as a guide to cut along and through.



2 Cut under and around the thigh bone, scraping the meat off of the bone with short, gentle swipes of the blade.



3 Work your fingers under the bone, lifting the bone away from the meat. Cut one end free of the tendons and meat.



4 Free the other end of the bone by cutting it away from the remaining meat and tendons. Scrape away any unwanted fat deposits on the meat with the tip of the knife.



Make room for the vegetables. The braised chicken thighs are removed from the pot to give the vegetables room to cook.



Thighs braise beautifully. Browning the chicken first gives the sauce a ton of flavor.

the heat to high and reduce the broth until 2½ to 3 cups remain, about 15 min.

In a small bowl, mash together the flour and the remaining 1 Tbs. butter with a fork to make a paste. Bring the liquid to a boil. Whisk the flour and butter paste into the broth, simmering until the liquid thickens slightly and coats a spoon, 2 to 3 min.

To serve, heat the sauce over medium-high heat until it's just simmering. Add the chicken and the vegetables and heat thoroughly for a few minutes. Serve the chicken and vegetables with plenty of the sauce and garnish with the parsley.

Broiled Coconut-Lime Chicken Thighs

This bake-broil method browns the thighs nicely and would work well with other marinades. Just be sure to keep an eye on the chicken as it broils so that it doesn't burn. *Serves four.*

2 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
1 tsp. coriander seeds
Pinch turmeric
2 cloves garlic, minced
¼ tsp. cayenne
3 scallions (white and green parts), coarsely chopped
Grated zest of 1 lime
Juice of 2 limes
2 Tbs. soy sauce
1 Tbs. rice-wine vinegar
⅓ cup coconut milk
¼ cup raw peanuts (salted are fine)

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
½ tsp. salt
8 chicken thighs (bone in, skin on), excess fat removed
1 Tbs. coarsely chopped peanuts
Cilantro sprigs for garnish
Lime wedges for garnish

In a blender, purée the ginger, coriander seeds, turmeric, garlic, cayenne, scallions, lime zest, lime juice, soy sauce, vinegar, coconut milk, ¼ cup peanuts, chopped cilantro, and salt until smooth. Pour the marinade over the chicken thighs and mix well. Marinate for 1 to 2 hours in the refrigerator.

Arrange the oven racks in the middle and top of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Line a jelly roll pan or other rimmed baking sheet with foil. Arrange the chicken thighs, skin side up, in a single layer with space between. Bake the chicken in the middle of the oven for 15 min. for small thighs, 20 min. for larger thighs.

Turn on the broiler. Broil the thighs 5 to 6 inches from the heat source until the chicken is golden brown on the outside and firm to the touch, 10 to 15 min. Be sure they don't burn.

Arrange the chicken thighs on a platter and serve immediately, garnished with the chopped peanuts, cilantro sprigs, and lime wedges.

Joanne Weir hosts her own PBS cooking series, Weir Cooking in the Wine Country. A cooking teacher and author, her cookbooks include You Say Tomato (Broadway) and Weir Cooking: Recipes from the Wine Country (Time Life). ♦



The dark meat of chicken thighs stands up well to the high heat of broiling. A curried coconut-lime marinade adds tang and a touch of heat.

Mexico's Surprising Rice Dishes

These recipes get complex flavor and great texture from the pilaf method and lots of savory additions



BY JIM PEYTON

Would your list of the world's greatest rice dishes include any from Mexico? Mine didn't until recently (perhaps due to my early years spent wolfing down combination plates in Mexican-American restaurants). I'd never dreamed that the cuisine laid claim to rice dishes that can be ranked in the same class as an Italian risotto or an Indian pulao.

It wasn't until I began to spend more and more time in central and southern Mexico and to enlarge my circle of Mexican friends that these recipes came to light, one after another, like unexpected treasures at a rummage sale. Ranging from earthy to elegant and able to be prepared a day or two ahead and reheated in the microwave, I find these rice dishes to be the ideal accompaniment for nearly any meal and, in the case of *arroz huérfano* (orphan's rice, pronounced ar-ROHS WHEHR-fah-no), an excellent main dish in its own right.

Simple ingredients, complex flavors

Rice came to Mexico from Spain, where it had been introduced by the Moors during their seven-century occupation. To the Spanish rice dishes, which often included onion, garlic, saffron, and nuts, Mexicans added tomatoes and both fresh and dried chiles, as well as their own inspiration. Most rice in Mexico looks more like what we think of as short-grain than long-grain. In truth, much of it is simply a long-grain variety produced and packaged with less than ideal quality control. Either variety, however, will serve for these recipes, and although certainly not traditional, Thai jasmine rice or some of the new American hybrids such as Texmati or Jasmati add that indefinable extra that has made them so popular in recent years.

Of equal—if not more—importance than the rice is the main liquid. The recipes will be good with plain water, better with canned chicken broth, and superb with a lovingly created homemade broth of chicken, turkey, pork, or a mixture of them. (You can find one of my favorite broth recipes on *Fine Cooking's* web site, www.finecooking.com.) When

Photos: Martha Holmberg



For the perfect texture, don't skip the last step. Once the liquid is absorbed, give the rice a gentle stir to mix all the ingredients and then cover and let it steam gently off the heat.



Just rice for dinner? You bet, when it's loaded with savory ingredients like nuts and ham, as in *arroz huérfano*.

following the rice recipes, use unsalted broth or adjust the salt accordingly.

The recipe for *arroz rojo* (pronounced ah-ROHS ROH-hoh) calls for ancho chiles, which are dried poblano chiles. They have an earthy, slightly fruity flavor and are usually of mild heat. But beware because, as with most chiles, they can vary in heat and are capable of producing an unpleasant surprise to those sensitive to chile heat. In the Southwest, these chiles are now quite common in supermarkets and are easily obtainable through mail-order sources (see Sources, p. 76).

You'll notice that I use several types of fat in the recipes—butter, olive oil, and vegetable oil. From the time of the Spanish conquest until recently, lard was the fat of choice in Mexico. (Before the Spaniards arrived, there was very little fat in the diet, and frying wasn't usually part of the cuisine.) In recent years, however, because of greater awareness of health considerations, as well as price and availability, vegetable oils have become more and more common. While a neutral-tasting oil can be used for any of the dishes, I like to use olive oil, often in combination with butter,

because although it doesn't taste like lard, it nevertheless provides a bold statement that goes well with most Mexican dishes, including these rices.

A blender makes the best purée

In Mexico, the blender is the modern appliance that imitates some of the functions traditionally performed by the *metate* and *molcajete*, specifically grinding chiles and puréeing sauces. A food processor works okay when you want to make roughly ground salsas, but it doesn't do as well for purées like the chile purée in the *arroz rojo* recipe. But if you don't have a blender, do use a processor for the chiles and to purée the spinach and cilantro for the *arroz verde* (pronounced ah-ROHS VEHR-day); your results just won't be as smooth.

The pilaf method lets ingredients meld

With their rice, the Spanish also brought their pilaf-style preparation. In this typically Middle Eastern method, the rice is first sautéed in a little oil until it just begins to color. Following this, some Mexican rice dishes require an intermediate step where



For the pilaf method, start by toasting the rice. The grains should just take on a bit of color, which helps to prevent a mushy result.



Add your liquid, add your flavor. Canned broth is okay, but if you use home-made, you'll appreciate the difference.



When the liquid boils, pop on the lid and lower the heat. Cook slow and steady until the liquid is absorbed. Then fluff, cover, and steam off the heat.

puréed tomatoes or chiles are fried with the rice until most of the liquid evaporates, leaving behind just the intense essence of the ingredient. Only then are the water or broth and other ingredients added and the pot covered. After the rice has simmered, it should be gently stirred, covered again, and allowed to steam off the heat for an additional 15 to 20 minutes. This breaks up any clumps of rice that might have formed, ensuring more even cooking and a better overall texture.



Arroz rojo gets a special step. After toasting the rice, add the chile purée and cook again until the grains begin to separate.

Earthy, rich, and slightly spicy, this "red" rice goes well with meat and full-flavored poultry.



RECIPES

Arroz Rojo de Chile Ancho (Ancho Chile Red Rice)

This earthy, brick-red rice is made by frying the uncooked rice with a purée of ancho chiles. The addition of milk tones down some of the chile-induced heat. *Serves six to eight.*

- 4 medium to large dried ancho chiles, stemmed and seeded**
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 4½ tsp. unsalted butter**
- ⅓ cup blanched, slivered almonds**
- 3 Tbs. olive oil**
- 1½ cups long-grain rice**
- ⅓ cup finely chopped onion**
- 1¾ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- 1¼ tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. dried oregano**
- 1 tsp. dried thyme**
- ½ cup sour cream (optional)**
- 1 avocado, peeled and sliced (optional)**

Put the chiles in a small saucepan. Cover with water, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, uncovered, for 15 min. Remove the pot from the heat, cover it, and let the chiles soak for 10 to 15 min.; drain. Put the chiles in a blender, add the garlic and ⅓ cup water, and blend for at least 1 min., starting at low speed and gradually turning to high speed, to make a purée; set aside.

Melt 1½ tsp. of the butter in a small skillet over medium to medium-low heat, add the almonds and cook, stirring often, until they are golden brown but not burned. Pour onto a plate and set aside.

Heat the olive oil and the remaining butter in a large pot or Dutch oven (with a good lid) over medium heat, add the rice and onions, and sauté, stirring frequently, for 5 to 6 min. The rice and onions should be starting to turn golden. Turn the heat to between medium and medium high, stir in the chile purée, and continue cooking, stirring every 30 seconds, until almost all the moisture has evaporated and the rice no longer sticks together, 7 to 10 min. Add the stock, milk, salt, oregano, and thyme, stirring to mix well. Bring the liquid to a boil, cover the pot, turn the heat

to very low, and simmer for 20 min. Turn off the heat, stir in the toasted almonds, cover the pot, and let the rice steam, off the heat, for about 15 min. Serve with a dollop of the sour cream and the avocado slices.

Arroz Verde (Green Rice)

Rich and refined, *arroz verde* is one of the most popular dishes I present to cooking classes. *Serves six to eight.*

½ cup tightly packed fresh cilantro sprigs (about ½ oz.)
1 cup tightly packed fresh stemmed spinach leaves (about 1½ oz.)
1¼ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
1¼ cups milk
1 tsp. salt
1 Tbs. olive oil
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
1½ cups long-grain rice
¼ cup finely minced onion
1 clove garlic, minced

Put the cilantro, spinach, and stock in a blender and blend until the vegetables are puréed. Add the milk and salt and blend a bit more until well combined.

In a medium (3-qt.) heavy-based saucepan (with a good lid) over medium heat, heat the olive oil and butter. When the butter is melted, add the rice and sauté, stirring about every 30 seconds, until it just begins to brown, 3 to 4 min. Add the onion and garlic and cook 1 min., stirring constantly. Add the contents of the blender, stir well, turn the heat to high, and bring to a boil. Cover the pan, turn the heat to very low, and cook for 20 min. Stir the rice carefully to avoid crushing it, cover, and cook another 5 min. Take the pan off the heat and let the rice steam in the covered pot for 10 min. Serve hot.

Arroz Huérfano (Orphan's Rice)

In Mexico, *arroz huérfano* is often served at lunch or for a late, light supper, accompanied by a bowl of soup and perhaps some tacos. *Serves six to eight.*

2½ cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
Pinch saffron threads (about ⅛ tsp.)
3 Tbs. oil
1½ cups long-grain rice
1 Tbs. finely minced onion
1 clove garlic, minced
¾ tsp. salt
1½ oz. bacon (about 1 thick slice or 2 thin slices)
1½ oz. finely chopped ham (about ¼ cup)
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
¾ cup pecan halves
½ cup blanched slivered almonds
⅓ cup pine nuts
1 Tbs. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

Heat the stock in a small saucepan until very hot but not boiling, and add the saffron. Turn off the heat and let the mixture sit for at least 10 min.

Heat a medium-large, heavy-based pot or Dutch oven (with a good lid) over medium heat until hot, pour in the oil, and then add the rice and sauté,



Great color, great flavor.

The cooking liquid for *arroz verde* is a blend of stock, milk, spinach, and cilantro.



stirring frequently, until a few grains just begin to brown, no more, 3 to 4 min. Add the onion and garlic and cook 1 min., stirring constantly. Turn the heat to high, add the saffron broth and salt, bring to a boil, cover, turn the heat down to very low, and cook for 15 min.

Meanwhile, in a medium skillet, fry the bacon until crisp, drain on paper towels, chop finely, and mix with the ham. Pour out the grease from the pan and add the butter. Melt the butter over medium heat, add the pecans, almonds, and pine nuts, and sauté them, stirring frequently until the almonds begin to turn golden brown, 5 to 7 min. Don't overcook the nuts or they'll be bitter. When the rice has cooked 15 min., stir in the bacon and ham, sautéed nuts, and parsley, cover the pot, and take it off the heat. Let the rice steam in the covered pot for 10 min. Serve hot.

Fragrance and visual appeal are key to the success of any dish, and *arroz verde* has plenty of both.

Jim Peyton has written three Mexican cookbooks, including the award-winning La Cocina de la Frontera: Mexican-American Cooking from the Southwest and the recently released Jim Peyton's New Cooking from Old Mexico. He lives in San Antonio, where he frequently teaches cooking classes. ♦

Classic French Crêpes

Make Great Fast Food

Crêpes are amazing. These paper-thin pancakes are fun to make, taste great, and always make what's inside of them seem more special. And talk about versatile: they can be savory or sweet; plain or fancy; a first course, a main course, or a dessert. You can roll them, fold them, or layer them—and best of all, you can freeze them. Unlike their thicker breakfast cousins, these pancakes don't suffer from the cold. Once defrosted, crêpes are once again pliable and delicious, ready to be rolled around your favorite filling.

Browned butter and a blender

Crêpes are essentially very thin pancakes. But since you want flat, not puffy, pancakes, there's no leavener. And, instead of adding plain melted butter to the batter, as you do for most pancakes, I cook the butter until it's golden brown and has a toasty fragrance, which gives the crêpes a nutty flavor.

I used to make my crêpe batter in a bowl, making a well with the dry ingredients and then adding the eggs and the milk. That method works fine, but I switched to using a blender. Not only is this method faster, but the results are also lighter, perhaps because more air is incorporated into the batter. For best results, have the ingredients at room temperature and don't overmix them. Then, let the batter rest for half an hour before cooking to let the flour absorb the liquid, creating the most tender crêpe.

A small, hot skillet and a twist of the wrist

I happen to have a set of pans made just for crêpes. They're small—about 6½ inches across, iron, practically flat, and well loved. I got mine in France, but you can find similar ones here (see Sources, p. 76). A



Stir in the key ingredient last. The butter makes the batter richer; browning it makes the crêpes intriguingly nutty.



A pitcher gives the batter a straight shot into the pan. As you pour, lift the pan off the stove and tilt it to spread the batter around the pan.

Browning the butter gives the pancakes a deep, toasty flavor

BY CHARLES PIERCE



Charles Pierce can juggle four pans at a time. Once you get the hang of making crêpes one at a time, try using two pans at once to speed things up.



Pour any extra batter out of the pan and back into your pitcher.

Photos: Joanne Smart & Martha Halmberg

small, nonstick skillet, the kind you may already use to make your omelets, works really well, too, and you can use less butter (if that's a concern) to keep the pancakes from sticking to the pan.

The proper heat makes all the difference. You need a hot—but not too-hot—pan to make crêpes. Heat that's too low won't brown the crêpes, and the pancakes will take so long to cook that they'll turn brittle and hard. Heat that's too high won't allow the batter to spread evenly in the pan and may cause holes in the crêpes. Start with the heat set to the high side of medium high, and adjust the flame as necessary during the cooking process. You're looking for heat that causes the batter to form a film over the entire surface of the pan almost on contact.

Pour, swirl, and pour. Making crêpes is a two-handed task. With one hand you pour the batter into the pan, while with the other hand you quickly swirl the pan to distribute the batter evenly. Don't be timid with the swirling. You'll need to lift the pan off



The crêpes cook in about a minute. They're ready to flip when the edges look dry, the middle is set, and the underside is nicely browned.

of the stove, and you'll need to tilt it to get full coverage (see the photo at left). You'll need to do this in mere seconds to be able to pour off any excess batter—a step crucial to keeping the pancakes thin—before it sets. The extra batter can go right back into your pitcher of batter. This pouring off will give an otherwise perfectly round pancake a “tail” of batter, which is easy to cut off with the spatula if you don't like the look.

Cook the crêpe until its underside is nicely browned. Cooking time will vary, but it usually takes one to two minutes to cook one side. You want to be sure that the edges of the crêpe look dry and that the center is set before flipping. I have asbestos fingers, so it's easy for me to pry the set crêpe from the hot pan, lift it gently, and turn it to the other side to cook. The second side, which never browns as well

as the first, will take about half as long to cook as the first, prettier, side. If you have tender fingertips, use a small spatula or a palette knife to lift and turn the pancakes.

Be ready to lose a few the first time around. Crêpes are easy once you get the hang of them, but you might sacrifice a little batter as you learn to gauge the pancake's thickness, the heat of the pan, and the exact cooking time. (Even now, I occasionally drop one on the floor because of my exuberant flipping.)



An immediate meal or a future treat

As the pancakes come off the heat, you can eat them right away spread with some butter or jam (or both) or quickly rolled around your favorite filling (see p. 48 for ideas). More likely, you'll want to let them cool either to stuff and bake them later that day or to refrigerate or freeze them for future use.

Don't stack hot pancakes or the resulting steam will make them gummy and cause them to stick together. Cool the crêpes briefly on a rack and then stack them between sheets of waxed paper. Wrap them tightly in plastic and refrigerate them for up to a week. To freeze them, I wrap stacks of eight in plastic and then again in foil. This way, I can take out the number typically called for in recipes and leave the rest of my frozen batch undisturbed. Crêpes will keep for months in the freezer. Defrost them in the refrigerator until they're pliable. *(Recipes follow.)*

Cool the crêpes on a rack before stacking them between sheets of waxed paper.

Want to see this in action?

Check out our video on making crêpes on *Fine Cooking's* web site: www.finecooking.com

Basic Crêpe Recipe

I like to have at least two pans going at once, but you can certainly make these one at a time. This recipe fits in a regular-size blender. If you want to double it, make two separate batches or follow the directions for hand mixing. You'll need some waxed paper for stacking the finished crêpes. *Yields about 22 six-inch crêpes.*

4 large eggs
1½ cups milk; more as needed
1½ cups all-purpose flour
¼ tsp. salt
6 Tbs. unsalted butter; more, softened, for the pan

In a blender, combine the eggs and milk. Add the flour and salt and mix on high speed until smooth, pausing once or twice to scrape down the sides of the blender with a rubber spatula.

Alternatively, combine the flour and salt in a large bowl. Push the flour aside to make a well in the center. Break the eggs into the center and pour in ¾ cup of the milk. Whisk in a small circle in the middle of the well to blend the eggs and the milk. Whisking constantly, gradually draw in the flour until you have a thick mixture. Add another ¾ cup milk. Whisk until the mixture forms a smooth batter.

Strain the batter (to remove any lumps) into a quart-size measuring cup with a spout or a pitcher. Let the batter rest at room temperature for 30 min.

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the 6 Tbs. butter. Continue cooking the butter until it



Crêpes rolled around chicken curry make a great lunch. Toasted almonds provide some crunch.

turns golden brown and has the aroma of toasted nuts, 3 to 5 min. Watch carefully and adjust the heat or move the pan around if necessary; the butter can quickly go from lightly browned to burned. Skim off any foam that rises to the top. Cool the butter slightly and stir it into the batter. The batter should be the consistency of heavy cream; thin it with a little more milk, if needed.

To cook the crêpes—Have ready the batter, a small nonstick skillet or a crêpe pan, plenty of softened unsalted butter, a flexible, heatproof spatula, a cooling rack, and about 20 torn sheets of waxed paper to use as separators.

Set the skillet over medium-high heat and add about

1 tsp. butter. Heat the butter, swirling it in the pan, until it stops bubbling. Pour in enough batter to coat the bottom of the pan, about a scant ¼ cup, depending on the size of the pan. Quickly tilt the pan in all directions to spread the batter evenly over the bottom and a bit up the sides of the pan. Immediately pour any excess batter back into the remaining batter. (You can cut off the "tail" this step leaves once the crêpe has set.)

Cook until the center of the crêpe is set and the bottom is lightly browned, 1 to 2 min., depending on the size of the skillet. Give the pan a good shake (or use a spatula to dislodge the crêpe) and turn it over. Cook until the center is firm and the edges underneath are lightly browned, about 30 seconds. Transfer the crêpe to a cooling rack. Proceed with the remaining batter, adding more butter to the pan as needed. Once cool, stack the crêpes between the sheets of waxed paper.

Create your own fillings

The beauty of crêpes is that they welcome many kinds of fillings. Try them hot off the griddle brushed with some soft sweet butter and jam, make up your own fillings, or try some of these suggestions.

Savory fillings for crêpes:

- ◆ Fill with sautéed spinach, mushrooms, or asparagus, simmered in cream until thickened.
- ◆ Fill with hunks of cooked crabmeat and ripe avocado.
- ◆ Line with a slice of ham, sprinkle with grated cheese, fold into a triangle, and heat until the cheese melts.
- ◆ Fill with leftover ratatouille, roll, sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese, and bake until warm.
- ◆ Spread with cream cheese mixed with dill and chives. Layer some thinly sliced smoked salmon. Roll and cut into slices for hors d'oeuvres.

Sweet fillings for crêpes:

- ◆ Spread with sweetened cream cheese or ricotta cheese mixed with lemon zest.
- ◆ Fill with chocolate ganache or chocolate mousse and serve with a *crème anglaise*.
- ◆ Fill with chopped fresh pineapple and bake in a butter-*rum* sauce.
- ◆ Stuff with pears, peaches, or ripe fresh berries that have been cooked with a little sugar. Serve with whipped cream or ice cream.
- ◆ Spread with butter and orange marmalade, flash under the broiler, and dust with confectioners' sugar for mock crêpes Suzette.



Curry Chicken Crêpes

This is a great way to use left-over chicken. But if you're going to poach some chicken just for the crêpes, add a few slices of fresh ginger to the poaching liquid for extra flavor. *Serves four.*

8 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 rib celery, thinly sliced
1 Tbs. curry powder, or to taste
Pinch cayenne, or to taste
¼ cup all-purpose flour
2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock

¼ cup golden raisins

½ cup heavy cream

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2½ cups ½-inch pieces cooked chicken (from about 4 small breast halves)

8 crêpes, made according to the recipe opposite

3 Tbs. sliced almonds, toasted

¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

In a medium saucepan, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion and celery; cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 min. Reduce the heat to medium and add the curry powder and cayenne and cook for another 1 min. Stir in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, until the flour has lost its raw taste, about 2 min. Whisk in the stock and raisins. Bring the mixture to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook, whisking often, until thickened, about 5 min. Add the cream, season with salt and pepper, increase the heat to high and boil to thicken for about 3 min. Strain about 1 cup of the mixture through a fine sieve to use as the sauce.

Combine the remaining cream mixture with the cooked chicken and stir well to blend. Taste and season with salt and pepper.

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly butter a medium baking dish. Arrange the crêpes flat on a large work surface. Divide the chicken filling evenly among them (about ⅓ cup each), spooning it in the center of each crêpe. Roll each crêpe into a thick cylinder. Arrange the filled crêpes in a single layer in the baking dish. Pour the reserved sauce over the center of the crêpes. Bake, uncovered, until the sauce is bubbly and the crêpes are lightly browned on the edges, about 20 min. Sprinkle with the toasted almonds and cilantro and serve.

Apple-Filled Crêpes with Caramel Sauce

You can make the apples a day or two ahead; use a slotted spoon to remove them from the sauce, reserving the sauce. Cover both and refrigerate. *Serves four.*

5 large apples (about 2½ lb.); 1 like Golden Delicious
6 Tbs. unsalted butter

½ cup sugar

½ cup dark brown sugar

½ tsp. pure vanilla extract

Pinch salt

½ cup heavy cream

8 crêpes, made according to the recipe opposite

Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream

Peel, core, and cut the apples into ½-inch dice. Set a large, heavy skillet over medium heat and melt the butter. Add the apples and sprinkle the sugar and brown sugar over them. Cook, covered, over medium-high heat, until the apples begin to soften, about 8 min. Uncover and continue to cook, stirring, until the apples are soft, 10 to 12 min. (The mixture will be boiling.) Stir in the vanilla and salt. Set aside to cool.

To assemble the crêpes—Heat the oven to 350°F and butter a large baking dish. Arrange the crêpes flat on a large work surface. Using a slotted spoon, remove the apples from the sauce and divide them among the crêpes, spreading them over the surface of each crêpe. Fold each crêpe to make a half moon and then fold in half again to create a thick triangle. Arrange the crêpes in the baking dish, overlapping them.

Bring the remaining sauce back to a boil. Add ½ cup cream and whisk until the boiling mixture has thickened and darkened again to brown. Drizzle about 1 Tbs. sauce over each crêpe (if there's extra sauce, reserve it to serve at the table). Bake the crêpes until the filling is very hot, about 15 min. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

Charles Pierce fell in love with crêpes while studying at La Varenne Cooking School in France. He's the author of The Chicken Parts Cookbook (Crown Publishing) and Beach House Cooking (Time-Life). ♦

These jaunty triangles are another stuffing option, especially suited for single servings.



Great Details Make a Great Kitchen

Check out top chefs' home kitchens for smart ideas to use in your own kitchen

The most pleasing kitchens seem to be those that both look beautiful and offer ingenious solutions to the storage problems every cook faces—where to store knives safely, how to organize baking sheets and cutting boards, and what to do about that avalanche of pot lids. Professional chefs are experts at addressing these problems. In restaurant kitchens, space and time are at a premium, so equipment must be neatly arranged and easy to reach. Many chefs put these ideas into practice in their own home kitchens.

To see some inspired storage systems, as well as full-fledged gorgeous kitchens, take a look at a new book from the Taunton Press, *Great Kitchens: At Home with America's Top Chefs*. (To order, see p. 16.)

Authors Ellen Whitaker, Colleen Mahoney, and Wendy A. Jordan visited top restaurant chefs (many of them *Fine Cooking* authors) to find out how they planned their own home kitchens. Not surprisingly, the authors found beautiful spaces, each with a unique style. But more interesting are the smart details (shown here) that the chefs incorporated, gleaned from years of working in tight spaces. These are ideas we can all use in our own kitchens.



A pot rack doubles as a light fixture in Terrance Brennan's (*Picholine*) New York kitchen. This custom structure houses a group of lights that flood the island workspace below. Rods and hooks maximize hanging space.

Photos: Grey Crawford



Pots and pans can drip dry and tools are always in plain view in Tom Douglas's home kitchen in Seattle (*Dahlia Lounge, Etta's Seafood*). Magnetic strips hold knives, whisks, and spatulas on the quilted stainless backsplash of his commercial sinks.

Plexiglas protects knives on display. "I think kitchen tools themselves are quite beautiful," says Ken Hom (*Imperial City, London*). The cover lets him view his Chinese cleavers and still keep them safe.



Unwieldy lids fit snugly into this tight pot rack in Lidia Bastianich's (*Felidia, Lidia's*) New York City kitchen. The rack for the pots, pans, and lids is easily accessible but not in the way.



An open drawer fitted with dowels holds pot lids. Nancy Oakes (*Boulevard*) and Bruce Aidells (*Aidells Sausage Co.*) customized their Bay Area kitchen with this island and an antique armoire (behind) with pull-out shelves.



An in-drawer knife block protects blades and fingers. Knives are easy to grab (no unsafe fumbling in a crowded drawer) and well cared for (the wooden block doesn't dull blades) in Georges Perrier's (*Le Bec-Fin, Brasserie Perrier*) Philadelphia area kitchen.





Horizontal and vertical storage for sheet pans and cutting boards are incorporated into Mark Miller's (*Red Sage, Coyote Café*) butcherblock island. The sheet pans rest on brackets for easy access.

Easy access makes the best storage

Since restaurant chefs are used to working in “stations,” where ingredients and tools for different types of cooking (baking, sautéing, prep work) are stored together, many have developed this idea for home use. Putting the equipment where you need it saves time and energy. For instance, Louisiana chef John Folse created a vertical storage area for bakeware directly above his ovens (photo at lower right). Mark Miller, creator of the *Coyote Café* and *Red Sage* restaurants, has a horizontal storage area for baking sheets at the end of his kitchen island closest to the range (photo at left). And Terrance Brennan, chef of *Picholine* in New York City, stores onions and potatoes in baskets (photo at right) directly under where they’ll most likely be chopped or sliced in his Westchester home kitchen.



Robert Del Grande created an open storage spot for cutting boards and rolling pins at the end of his kitchen island. Del Grande (*Café Annie, Café Express, Houston*) has easy access to these everyday tools, which rest in a rack fitted into the open cabinet.

Roll-out shelves hide clutter but are easy to access in Joachim Splichal's (*Patina, Pinot, Los Angeles*) streamlined kitchen in southern California. Shallower upper cabinets are perfect for glassware. This storage area adjoins the Splichals' dining area.





Slide-out baskets in Terrance Brennan's kitchen store potatoes, shallots, onions, and kids' toys, too. The baskets are under the center island, which is both a prep area and a place for kids to spread out.



A deep pull-out drawer with dividers is Hubert Keller's solution for storing delicate serving platters that are hard to stack. Keller (*Fleur de Lys*) and his wife customized many of their cabinets for holding hard-to-store items when they remodeled their San Francisco kitchen.



Stow-away pantries hide ingredients but pull out easily for quick access in Georges Perrier's kitchen. Ingredients don't get lost in the back of a deep shelf, and the wire racks are sturdy and easy to clean.



The cabinet area above double wall ovens is a natural spot for bakeware. Muffin tins, baking sheets, and roasting pans are out of the way but still within easy reach for Cajun chef John Folse (*Lafitte's Landing*, Donaldsonville, Louisiana).



A thick butcherblock cutting board made of ash slips inside a center island table when not in use. Anthony Ambrose (*Ambrosia on Huntington*) positioned the chopping block directly across from the range in his Boston area kitchen.

Custom details streamline work

When the important functions of a home kitchen are carefully planned and executed, there's still room for extra details that may not be vital but that do save steps. Frank McClelland, chef of L'Espalier in Boston, installed a faucet over the stove to fill pasta pots (photo at bottom left). Tom Douglas, of Seattle's Dahlia Lounge and Etta's Seafood, designed a cutout for his island countertop for either compost or garbage (photo at bottom right). And Charles Dale (of Aspen's Renaissance) put the space over his sink to good use by installing a stainless-steel dish drainer (photo below).



Less lugging with a handy tap. In his kitchen outside of Boston, Frank McClelland (*L'Espalier*) installed a faucet over the six-burner stove for filling pasta pots with water.



This stainless-steel dish drainer lets plates and glasses drip over the sink. There's even a silverware basket attached to the drainer in Charles Dale's Colorado kitchen (*Renaissance*, Aspen).

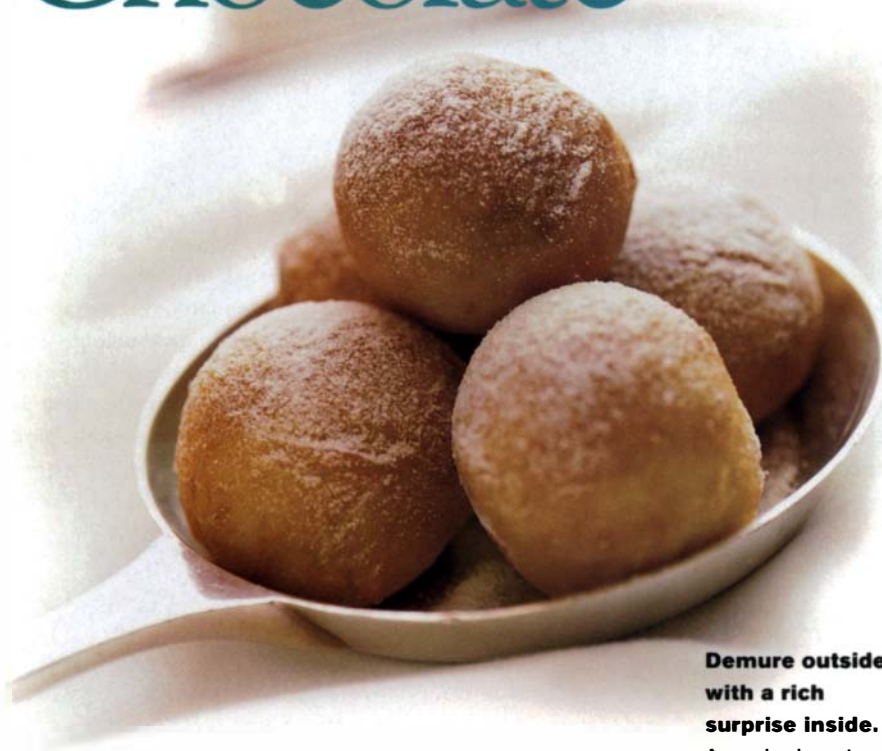


Just scrape away the scraps. An opening cut in the island counter of Tom Douglas's kitchen can be used to discard compost or garbage into the pull-out bin below.

Crisp Beignets Hide a Warm Chocolate Filling

Rich ganache is at the heart of these tiny, tender fritters

BY ROCCO LUGRINE



Demure outside, with a rich surprise inside. A marked contrast in texture is key to the appeal of these pastries.

About six years ago, I had to create a dessert for a contest. I wanted to make something warm and chocolatey that wasn't just another warm chocolate cake. So I began by experimenting with different techniques for cooking chocolate, eventually getting hooked on the idea of frying it, like fried ice cream. I rolled it in different kinds of coatings, like nuts, to protect it, but it would always explode or melt.

Then I came up with the idea of using a dough as the coating—making, in essence, a filled fritter or beignet (pronounced ben-YAY). The dough would offer lots of protection to the chocolate while still remaining light and crisp. And the flavor of the dough is fairly neutral, so it lets the warm chocolate be the star. It worked. I didn't win the contest (I think a warm chocolate cake won, actually), but I was really pleased with my new creation, and so

were the customers at Brasserie Perrier, where I'm the pastry chef.

The outside's a simple yeast dough

My early experiments were with different kinds of batters and doughs—first a tempura batter, but that was too crunchy. Next, I folded in whipped egg whites, but the result was too spongy and greasy. I ended up liking the results I got with what is essentially a brioche dough, a yeast dough enriched with eggs and butter.

The dough is pretty easy to make—I do it all in a stand mixer—as long as you pay attention to the critical points. Like the temperature of your milk; it should be warm, but not too hot or it will kill the yeast. Once you've added all the ingredients to the mixer, the dough looks lumpy, but don't worry. As it continues mixing, it becomes smooth and elastic as

Mix the dough, and then chill for easy handling



Warm the milk in a small pan and add the yeast to it. Stir gently until dissolved. Put the flour, sugar, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment and blend the dry ingredients briefly.



Set the mixer on low speed and slowly pour in the milk mixture, mixing until the dry ingredients are moistened. Slowly dribble in the eggs, mixing for a few seconds between additions. Stop the mixer and scrape the sides and bottom to get any flour missed by the paddle. Start mixing again and slowly pour in the melted butter.



Increase the speed to medium and mix until the butter is incorporated and the dough becomes smooth and elastic and pulls away from the sides and bottom of the bowl, about 8 minutes. Test the dough by greasing your hands, picking up the dough, and stretching it gently—it should extend easily without tearing.



Put the finished dough in a buttered bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 3 hours and up to 24 hours. Check the dough once in a while—if it's rising, gently push it down.

the gluten develops. In fact, it's almost impossible to overmix this dough—and it's crucial not to undermix it, which would produce a very wet dough that would rip when you tried to shape it. You can tell that the dough is ready by stretching it: grease your hands, pick up the mass of dough, and stretch it gently. It should be elastic enough to extend several inches without tearing or breaking.

Once the dough is the right consistency, it needs to rest and chill so you can work with it without going nuts. As it rests, it will proof (or rise) a bit, which isn't ideal since I find that an airy dough makes very spongy beignets. If the dough looks like it has risen a lot, just gently push it down in the bowl.

The center's nothing but a truffle—yum

The filling is basically a ganache—which is what's at the center of a truffle—and it's quite easy to make: just pour hot cream over chopped chocolate and whisk until melted and smooth. You may end up with a few unmelted lumps, which you can take care of by popping the bowl of ganache over a water bath for a few seconds. Just be careful not to use too much

heat or you'll scorch the chocolate or cause the mixture to separate.

To this basic ganache, I add some unsalted butter that I've softened so it's very, very soft but not melted or greasy. The French term for this is *en pommade* (pronounced ahn poh-MAHD), meaning it's like cold cream, as in Pond's cold cream. The butter gives the ganache great flavor and a satiny-smooth body, but it is a bit tricky to incorporate it. You must be sure the ganache is still liquid—so that the butter is easy to blend in with a whisk or an immersion blender—yet completely cool, or you'll melt the butter, which will separate and leave a greasy texture and flavor.

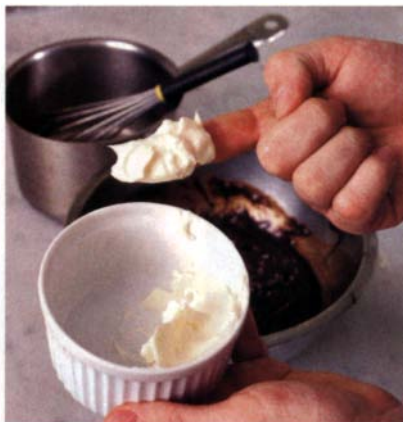
Aim for smooth centers, tightly wrapped

You want to make truffle-size balls of ganache that are completely smooth and are all the same size. You can roll the ganache with your hands, use a tiny ice-cream scoop, or do what I do, which is to fill a pastry bag and pipe out the balls. This is easiest if you let the ganache harden slightly by leaving it at cool room temperature, but pay attention so that it stays pliable and doesn't become too hard to pipe or

Make the ganache and shape smooth centers



Put the chopped chocolate in a large bowl. In a small saucepan, bring the cream to a boil. Pour the boiling cream over the chocolate, let it sit for 30 seconds to start melting, and then whisk until the chocolate is melted and smooth. Let the ganache cool to room temperature, about 30 minutes, but be sure it stays liquid.



Make sure your butter is really soft and creamy (but not at all melted) and then whisk or beat it into the room-temperature ganache, a little at a time, until completely blended.



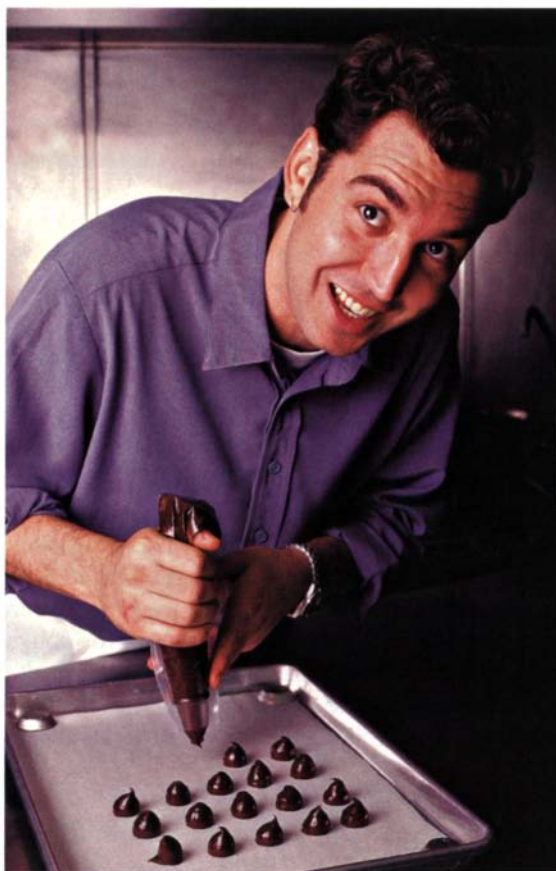
The ganache should be shiny, showing that it's emulsified (see the area around the blender). If it's grainy (see the ganache around the rim), mix with a hand blender or whisk to re-emulsify. Chill, stirring often, until set up but not hard, about 40 minutes. It should have the consistency of buttercream frosting.

scoop. After you're finished piping, you can tap down any points that may have formed so that they won't rip the pastry wrapping. The final step is to freeze the ganache balls to give them a bit of protection from the hot oil so they don't melt too fast during cooking.

There are two tricks to wrapping the truffle centers, aside from working very fast so the dough doesn't begin to proof and the ganache doesn't start to melt. First, cover the center completely. If there are any holes or weak seams, the chocolate will leak out during frying and make a mess. Second, once you've wrapped the center with dough, pinch off any excess to make a very thin coating, which will translate into a light layer of fried dough.

Use hot, fresh oil. And no crowding, please

The first ingredient to put on your list when you make this dessert is a fresh bottle of oil. You don't want to use oil you've used for anything else, and even a hint of rancidity from an old bottle will ruin the effect of the crunchy but delicate coating. I recommend peanut, canola, or safflower oil. *(Continued)*



Line a baking sheet with parchment or waxed paper. Fit a pastry bag with a large plain tip and fill the bag with the ganache. Pipe out 50 to 60 blobs about the size of Malted Milk Balls.



Smooth off any points. Freeze the centers until they're quite firm, at least an hour (up to two days if wrapped).

Wrap the chocolate with the dough



Arrange your work station so you have the chilled beignet dough, the tray of ganache centers, a little flour for dipping your hands, and a lightly floured baking sheet to hold the wrapped beignets. Fill a large pot about one-third full with fresh oil and let it heat up as you shape the beignets. Have a deep-frying thermometer ready.



Dip your hands in the flour and pull off a small piece of dough about the size of a prune.



Flatten the dough slightly between your fingers and then wrap it around the chocolate center. Try to make the wrapping as thin as possible, but avoid patches that are so thin you can see the center through them.

I fry the beignets at a fairly hot temperature (350°F), which browns the outside nicely and seals in the chocolate. If you're using a regular saucepan, you'll need to fry only a few at a time to keep the oil temperature steady; if you add too many cold dough balls, the temperature will drop and your beignets will start soaking up too much oil. Also, if the oil is too cool, the dough will turn grayish and the chocolate will leak out. The beignets tend to float like corks, too, so push them under the oil now and then to get even browning.

A do-ahead strategy makes beignets great for parties. You can shape and wrap the beignets and freeze them (for up to two days) on a baking sheet covered with plastic. (Don't let them touch one another or the dough wrapping may stick and rip later.) Take them from the freezer no more than 30 minutes before cooking; you just want the dough to thaw but not to get too soft or start rising. If the beignets look a little puffy or uneven, flour your hands and roll them around again. Now just fry them following the directions above.

I like to serve the truffle beignets really hot, with just a dusting of confectioners' sugar for looks, and with a cool sauce such as *crème anglaise* or a fresh fruit coulis. You need to remember that these little gems contain a very hot liquid chocolate center. You'll be tempted to pick one up and pop it in your mouth, but please, use a fork!

RECIPES

Chocolate-Filled Beignets

The better the chocolate, the better the beignet. I like Valrhona; see Sources on p. 76. *Yields 50 to 60 beignets, with a bit of dough leftover.*

FOR THE BEIGNETS:

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup whole milk
1 package (2¼ tsp.) active dry yeast
18 oz. (4 cups) all-purpose flour
3 Tbs. sugar
1½ tsp. salt
6 large eggs, lightly beaten
3 oz. (6 Tbs.) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly
Vegetable oil for frying
Confectioners' sugar for dusting

FOR THE GANACHE CENTERS:

14 oz. good-quality bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1 cup heavy cream
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened *en pommade* (see text, p. 56)

For the method, review the text and then follow the photos and captions starting on p. 56.

Crème Anglaise

Plain vanilla is always delicious, but this sauce is easy to flavor in other ways. *Yields about 2 cups.*

2 cups milk
½ vanilla bean, split
6 large egg yolks
6 Tbs. sugar



Pinch off the excess dough and massage the beignet with your fingertips to be sure all holes are closed and the seams are tight.



Roll the beignet between your hands to smooth. Set the beignet on the floured baking sheet. Continue until all the centers are wrapped. If the dough starts to soften or rise too much while you're working, put everything in the freezer for a few minutes to chill.

Fry the beignets until puffed and brown



When the oil registers 350°F on a thermometer, start frying, adding just a few beignets at a time. The beignets will float, so gently press them down with a spoon or a spider so they brown evenly.



Fry until deep golden brown, about 4 minutes, and drain on paper towels. Serve hot, dusted with confectioners' sugar.

Put the milk and vanilla bean in a medium, heavy-based saucepan and bring to just below a simmer. Turn off the heat and leave to infuse, about 20 min.

Put the egg yolks and sugar in a medium bowl and immediately whisk until pale yellow and thick enough to leave a ribbon trail when you lift the whisk.

Reheat the milk gently until it's just starting to steam. Slowly pour about half of it into the yolks, whisking constantly. Pour this mixture back into the rest of the milk and cook over very low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the custard just begins to thicken slightly and you can trace a line across the back of the spoon. Strain into a clean bowl or pitcher; chill and serve cool.

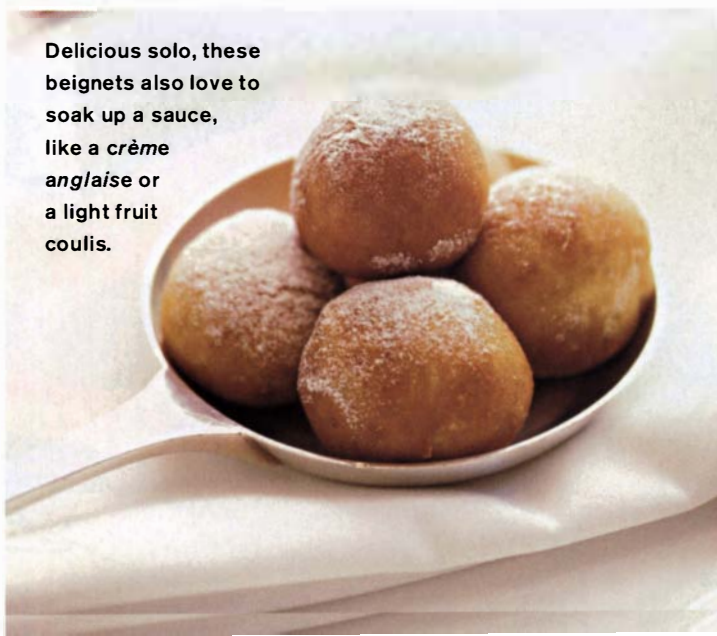
Mint—Rinse and dry a small bunch of fresh mint and add it to the milk and vanilla; heat and steep for about 20 min., strain, and then continue with the recipe.

Coffee—Add 2 tsp. instant coffee to the milk and vanilla and then continue with the recipe.

Caramel—Increase the sugar to 8 Tbs. Start by putting 5 Tbs. of the sugar in a saucepan and cooking it over medium heat until caramelized, shaking frequently to prevent burning. When the sugar is dark amber and fragrant, carefully add the milk and vanilla. Stir until the caramel is dissolved. Bring to a simmer; turn off the heat and infuse 20 min. Continue with the recipe, using only the remaining 3 Tbs. of sugar with the egg yolks.

Rocco Ligrine is the executive pastry chef at Brasserie Perrier in Philadelphia. ♦

Delicious solo, these beignets also love to soak up a sauce, like a *crème anglaise* or a light fruit coulis.



Two Chefs, Same Ingredients: Two Deliciously Different Dishes

How do the pros
create a new dish?
To find out, we gave
two innovative chefs
the same shopping
list and asked them
both to improvise

COMPILED BY AMY ALBERT



Photos excepted where noted: Scott Phillips

Maybe this happens to you. You're wandering through the super-market, farmers' market, or produce store, eyeing the wares. The fennel looks great, there's beautiful pork loin on sale, and heads of delicate, leafy Napa cabbage that just got unloaded are calling your name from across the aisle. You've got some potatoes at home already, and you'd love to use up some of those chives that are still going strong from this summer's garden...

So how do you transform market inspiration into delicious dishes? We gave two of our favorite *Fine Cooking* authors the same market basket of ingredients and asked them to show us how they improvise. Here are the delicious—and completely different—dishes that Katy Sparks, the chef at Quilty's in New York City, and Alan Tardi, the chef and owner of Follonico (also in New York City), came up with, along with the technique and reasoning they applied.

Rules of the game

Katy and Alan started with the same five market ingredients. They were allowed to drop one of those ingredients, to use unlimited ingredients from a basic pantry, and to choose up to three "wild-card" ingredients.

Market ingredients

Boneless pork loin, Napa cabbage, fennel, new potatoes, chives

Basic pantry items

Butter, vegetable oil, olive oil, cream, milk, eggs, flour, garlic, onions, pepper, salt, stock (beef, chicken, or vegetable), sugar, vinegar, water, white wine

Wild cards

Any condiment, flavoring, fruit, herb, meat, spice, starch, or vegetable

Katy Sparks calls on autumnal flavors



"As soon as I put this dish together, I knew it was something I'd want to eat with friends at home," says Katy Sparks, the chef at Quilty's in New York City.

I love to cook seasonally, and I had fall flavors in mind while creating this dish. To start, I picked up on the pork's earthy flavors by studding it with garlic. In autumn, I love the way the market smells like apples, and I love apples paired with pork (that's probably because of my mother's pork with applesauce). So I made an apple cider glaze and added ginger (using two wild cards) because ginger's spicy warmth really awakens fruit flavors. The glaze gives an appealing sweet-tart counterpoint to garlic's earthiness. So far, the mix of market ingredients has a traditional, hearty, northern European feel. Cabbage would fit right in, but I decided to drop it to lighten the dish up and to make it feel more modern because that's more my style.

I chose to roast the pork loin whole, rather than cut it into chops, because I love the ratio of caramelized exterior to juicy interior that you get by roasting a whole loin. Roasting a loin whole keeps it moist, too. And because pork needs moisture, I wanted to make a sauce in addition to the glaze. At home, I don't have an array of reduced stocks and *demi-glaces* ready to use, the way I do at the restaurant. So instead of doing a big-deal reduction sauce, I decided to use the fennel as a sauce base. I like fennel's delicate flavors: browning only intensifies them, and then you can extend the whole thing with wine, stock, and butter. For silky contrast, I made mashed potatoes. My third wild card—heady, extravagant white truffle oil—is the crowning touch, if you choose to use it.



Cider-Glazed Pork Loin with Fennel Coulis is elegant enough for a dinner party, but home-tasting, too.

RECIPE

Katy Sparks's Cider-Glazed Pork Loin with Fennel Coulis

Serves six.

FOR THE PORK LOIN:

3-lb. boneless pork loin
12 cloves garlic, peeled and halved lengthwise
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

3 Tbs. vegetable oil
4 Tbs. unsalted butter

FOR THE CIDER GLAZE:

1 Tbs. unsalted butter
3 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
4 cups apple cider
½ cup sugar
6 whole black peppercorns

FOR THE FENNEL COULIS:

4 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 medium bulb fennel, trimmed, cored, and thinly sliced
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
½ cup dry white wine
¾ cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock

FOR THE POTATOES:

2 lb. new potatoes (preferably red-skinned), roughly the same size, scrubbed
6 Tbs. unsalted butter
½ cup minced chives
3 Tbs. white truffle oil or extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

To prepare the pork loin—Heat the oven to 350°F. With a sharp paring knife, cut 24 slits, 1 inch deep, all over the pork loin, spaced at least 1 inch apart. Push half a clove of garlic into each slit. Season the pork well with salt and pepper. In a flameproof roasting pan, heat the vegetable oil until very hot. Add the pork and sear well on all sides. Remove from the

heat, let cool a bit, add the butter, and put the pan in the oven. Roast the pork, basting frequently with the pan drippings, for about 45 min. (Meanwhile, make the cider glaze; see method below.) Begin brushing the cider glaze over the pork every 5 min. for another 20 to 25 min. (for a total cooking time of about 1 hour, 10 min.) or until an instant-read thermometer reads 140°F (the meat will continue to cook as it rests). Reserve any remaining glaze, remove the pork from the oven, tent with foil, and let it rest at least 10 to 15 min. before slicing.

WHILE THE PORK IS ROASTING:

♦ **Prepare the glaze**—In a medium saucepan, melt the butter. Add the ginger and sauté gently for 2 to 3 min. Add the cider, sugar, and peppercorns. Simmer vigorously until syrupy, about 25 min.; the sauce may reduce to about one-quarter of its original volume, depending on how sweet the cider is. You should end up with about 1½ cups of glaze.

♦ **Make the coulis**—In a large skillet, melt the butter. Add the fennel, onion, and garlic. Season lightly with salt and pepper and cook uncovered over medium heat, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften and brown, about 15 min. Turn the heat to medium low and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are evenly colored, very wilted, and deep brown, about 40 min. total. Add the wine and simmer until reduced to a syrup. Add the chicken stock and simmer until reduced slightly, 1 to 2 min. Transfer to a blender or food processor and purée. Taste and add salt and pepper, if needed. Keep warm.

♦ **Make the potatoes**—Put the potatoes in a stockpot and cover with 3 qt. well-salted water. Bring to a gentle boil; cook until tender, 20 to 40 min. depending on the size of the potatoes. Drain. Smash the hot potatoes with a potato masher. Fold in the butter, chives, and truffle oil or olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.

To serve, cut the meat into thin slices, spoon a thick ring of coulis around the plate, arrange the potatoes and pork on top, and drizzle with the glaze.



Katy Sparks picked three "wild cards": cider, fresh ginger, and truffle oil.

Alan Tardi chose a rustic braise

I decided to create a dish that reflects the way I'd cook at home on a Sunday night in the fall. Except for the chives, all the ingredients take well to long cooking. I used everything in the basket and added two wild cards: fennel seed to accent the fresh fennel, and toasted breadcrumbs, which provide both textural counterpoint and eye appeal. I decided to cut the pork into medallions rather than leave it as a whole roast because, with medallions, more surface comes in contact with the flavors in the braising liquid.

For this type of a slow-cooking cool-weather dish, I like to use a traditional Italian method of braising pork in milk. Milk's lactic acid is a good tenderizer, but it seems to need heat to activate it. (I've tried



"This is how I'd cook at home on a relaxed Sunday night when the weather's turning chilly," says Alan Tardi, the chef at Follonico in New York City.

soaking the pork in milk overnight ahead of time, but this doesn't seem to have any tenderizing effect.) The resulting milk curds in the finished dish may look a little strange if you've never tried milk-braising before, but don't worry—you'll be rewarded with a flavorful, rustic, one-dish meal.

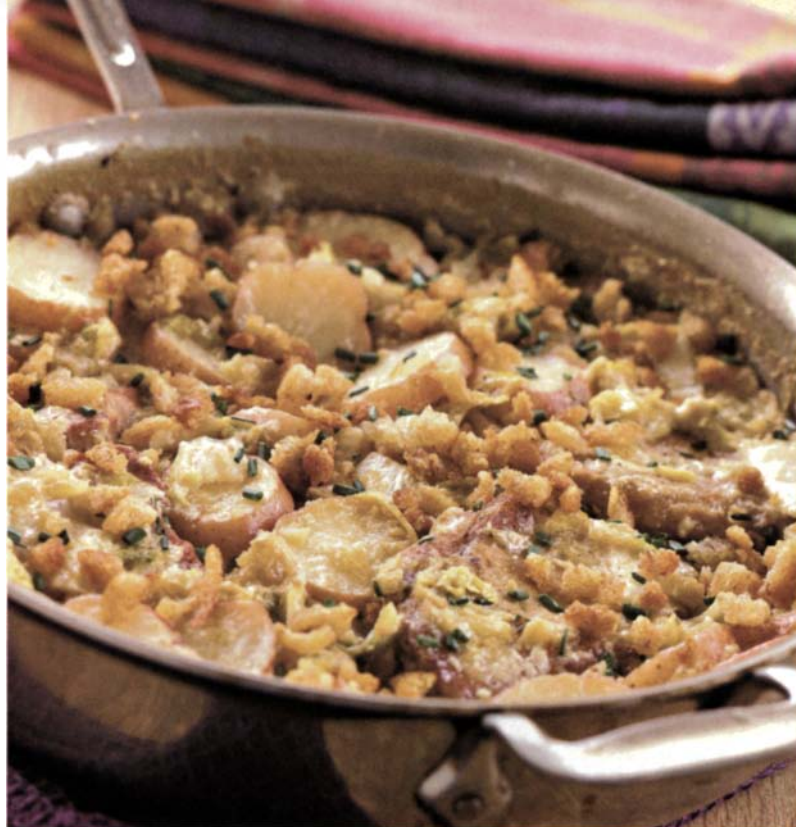
The vegetables in the market basket are a natural for a pork braise because they all turn velvety-tender when cooked low and slow, and they contribute a lot of flavor to the cooking liquid. Braising also makes for a streamlined process, and at the outset, I'd decided to make an unfussy dish. I do take an extra step with one ingredient, however: I parboil the potatoes before I add them to the pan to make sure they're done at about the same time as the cabbage and the fennel. Cooking time can vary with potatoes, depending on their size, age, and variety, so I get more control this way. Finishing the dish with a breadcrumb-chive mixture gives a golden topping that provides a good crunch and completes the homey feel.

RECIPE

Alan Tardi's Milk-Braised Loin of Pork with Fennel & Cabbage

Serves four.

- ¼ cup olive oil**
- 1-lb. boneless pork loin, cut into 4 slices**
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 Tbs. all-purpose flour**
- 1 small onion (preferably Vidalia), quartered and sliced**
- 1 small fennel bulb, green tops and center core removed, cut into 1-inch dice**
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 1 tsp. chopped fennel seed**
- ¼ cup dry white wine**
- 2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock**



- ½ cup heavy cream**
- 4 cups milk**
- ½ small head Napa cabbage, quartered lengthwise, cored, and cut into 1-inch thick ribbons**
- 1 lb. new potatoes, sliced ¼ inch thick and boiled until almost tender**
- 1 ½ Tbs. unsalted butter**
- ½ cup coarse-textured fresh breadcrumbs**
- 2 Tbs. ¼-inch-long pieces fresh chives**

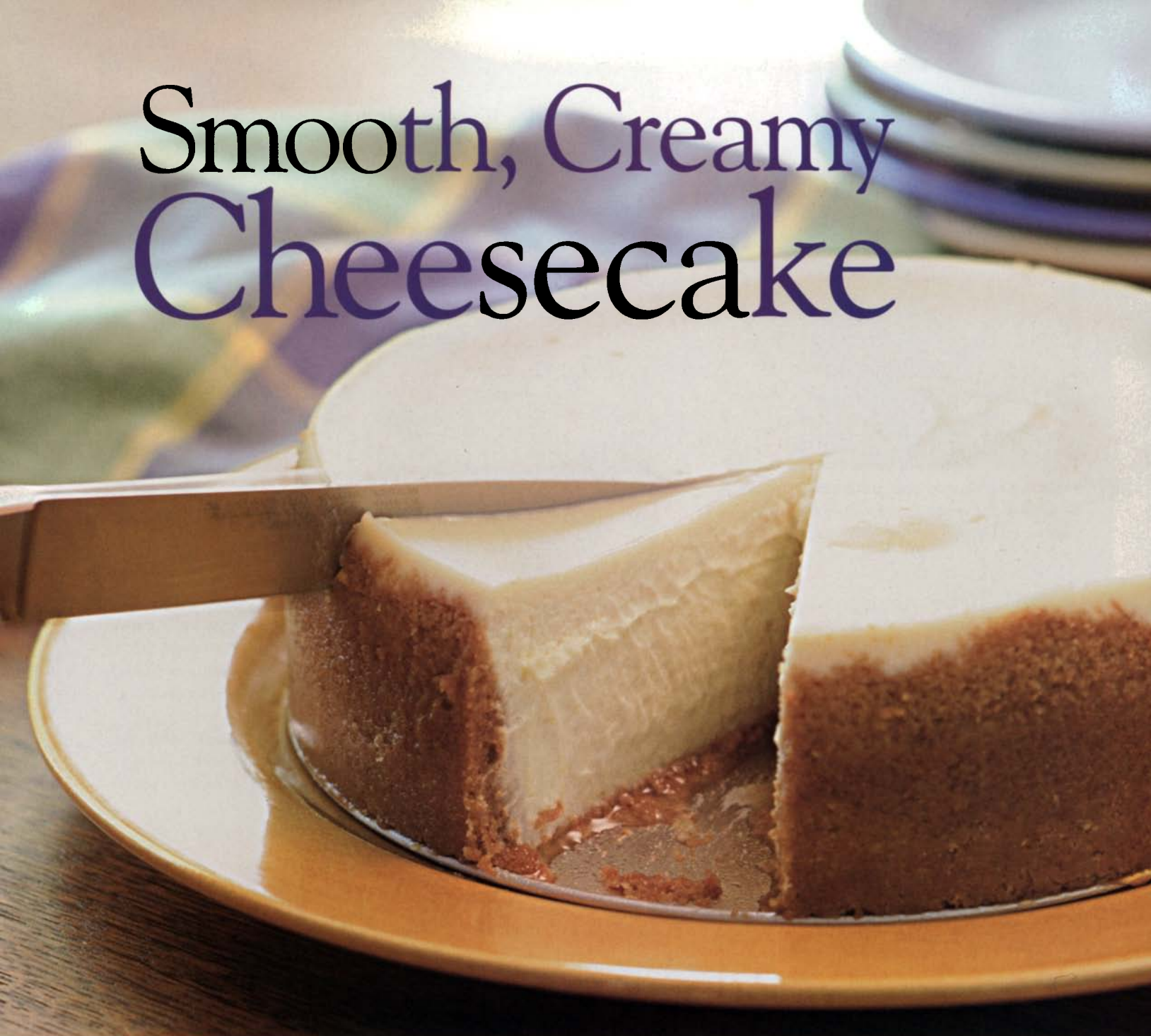
In a straight-sided ovenproof sauté pan or skillet, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Season the pork with salt and pepper, dust with the flour, and cook in the oil until golden brown, about 2 min. per side. Remove the meat and keep it warm. Pour out all but 1 Tbs. of fat from the skillet. Add the onion and fennel; sauté until they begin to soften, about 5 min. Add the garlic and fennel seed; sauté briefly until both are fragrant. Season with salt and pepper. Add the wine, raise the heat, and boil until reduced to a syrup, scraping up the brown bits with a wooden spoon. Add the stock and boil until reduced to about ½ cup of liquid. Add the heavy cream and 2 cups of the milk. Simmer until the liquid is reduced by about half (you should end up with about 1 ½ cups liquid). Stir in the cabbage and potatoes and arrange the pork slices in the pan, adding any accumulated juices. Add another 1 cup milk. Turn the heat to medium low and cook gently, uncovered, adding more milk if needed to keep the pork just covered with liquid, lowering the heat if necessary, until the meat is fork-tender and the sauce is creamy, about 50 min. (Small milk curds may form in the sauce; this is okay.) If the sauce is too thick, add a little more milk to smooth it out. Meanwhile, in a small skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Fry the breadcrumbs in the melted butter until deep golden, tossing constantly. Add the chives to the breadcrumbs, sprinkle the mixture over the braise, and serve. ♦

Milk-Braised Loin of Pork is a one-dish meal that's soulful and satisfying. Set it on the stove at a lazy simmer while you do the Sunday crossword puzzle.



Alan chose two "wild cards": breadcrumbs and fennel seed. His milk-braising method might seem unusual, but the result is a deeply flavorful dish.

Smooth, Creamy Cheesecake



For a silky-smooth filling, omit the starch and bake in a water bath until the edges are set but the center jiggles

BY ROSE LEVY BERANBAUM

If there could be only one type of cake in the world, let it be cheesecake. Of course, some people would argue that cheesecake, with its smooth, creamy texture, isn't really a cake at all except in shape. Indeed, my favorite style of cheesecake is more custard than cake, set by eggs rather than by starch. That's the key to its satiny texture. As long as I treat cheesecake like a custard, coddling it in a water bath and baking it until set at the edges but still wobbly in the center, I never fail to get the supremely smooth texture that I adore.

Cheesecake is the easiest cake to make. It can be mixed in minutes with an electric mixer or in less than

Photos except where noted: Judi Rutz



The quintessential
cheesecake:
dense, creamy,
and faintly lemony.



"My cheesecakes win admirers even among the 'I don't like cheesecake' crowd," says Rose Levy Beranbaum. "Yes, they're *that* good."

a minute in a food processor. My basic cheesecake is dense, creamy, and tangy. It consists simply of cream cheese, sour cream, fresh lemon juice, sugar, eggs, salt, and pure vanilla extract. Some cheesecake recipes include flour or cornstarch to help firm them up, but I prefer to let the eggs do all the thickening rather than add a starch, which would produce a slightly denser texture. (See Food Science, p. 74, for a discussion of cheesecakes with starch and without.) For the cream cheese, I like Philadelphia brand. Natural and low-fat cream cheeses don't seem to work as well. Bring the cream cheese to room temperature so it softens and blends completely with the other ingredients. To

prevent aeration, which can cause the cheesecake to rise unevenly, be careful not to overmix the batter.

I like to dress up cheesecakes with a crust and a topping. I might use cookie crumbs or a thin layer of tender sponge cake for a crust. For a stunning special-occasion cheesecake, I might line the sides of the pan with ladyfingers. My pumpkin cheesecake (p. 68) is heavenly when garnished with swirls of caramel sauce (visit www.finecooking.com for my sauce recipe). Fruit glazes thickened with cornstarch (not gelatin, which would dissolve from acidity in the batter) make wonderful toppings; try sour cherry, blueberry, cranberry, or even a lemon curd.

Choose the right size pan

The ideal pan for cheesecake is a springform. A deep cake pan will also work, but you'll have to invert the cheesecake twice to unmold it. My classic cheesecake needs an 8-inch pan; the pumpkin one needs a 9-inch pan. Be safe: measure with a ruler, inside rim to inside rim. Pan size is important because it affects cooking time (in too small a pan, the filling will rise higher and take longer to cook; vice versa for too big a pan).

Crushed cookie crusts provide contrasting texture and flavor. Sometimes I press the cookie

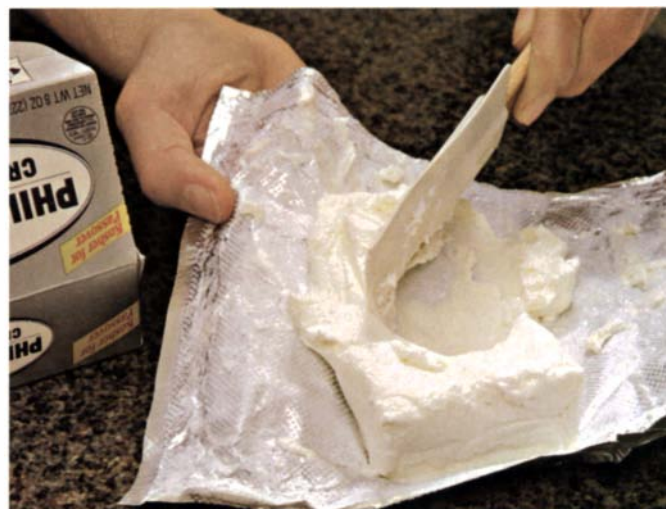
crumbs into the pan so they become a shell for the filling. I like a thin crust that goes almost all the way up the sides of the cake (see the photos below). Another option is to bake the cheesecake without a crust and then pat the cookie crumbs on the sides after chilling. To do this, crush about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of crumbs. Scoop up some crumbs in one hand, hold the cake on its base in the palm of the other hand, and then, tilting the cake a bit, press the crumbs gently onto the sides.

A water bath prevents curdling

Cheesecakes without added starch are vulnerable to curdling if baked at too high a temperature, so I protect them with a water bath, just as I do with any baked custard. By buffering the cooking, a water bath lets me use a higher temperature without the risk of scrambling the eggs. Cheesecakes baked in cookie crusts are less likely to meet this fate (the crust acts as an insulator), but since they're not invincible, I use a water bath even for them.

Before setting the springform pan in the water bath, wrap it in a double layer of heavy-duty foil to prevent water from seeping into the springform—you'll need extra-wide foil for a 9-inch cake. (If you're using a solid cake pan, skip this step.) The pan holding the water should be a few inches wider than the cheesecake pan and about the same height; if it's too high, it will retard baking. An extra-large cake pan or a roasting pan is perfect for the job. Here's a tip: if the water-bath pan is made of aluminum, dissolve a large pinch of cream of tartar in the water to keep the pan from discoloring.

For the smoothest, creamiest cheesecake, give the oven plenty of time to heat up and use an oven thermometer. You'll notice that my cheesecake



Start with soft, room-temperature cream cheese to avoid flecks of unblended cheese in the batter.

recipes don't have doneness tests. That's because the oven door must remain closed for a full hour after the heat is turned off. The cheesecake continues baking very gently in the oven's residual heat—opening the door at this point could result in underbaking. Because these recipes depend so heavily on time and temperature rather than visual or tactile doneness cues, it's critical that the oven is completely up to temperature before the cheesecake goes in.

When you do finally remove the cake from the oven, the center will still be jiggly. Don't panic; that's the way it should be. After several hours in the refrigerator, it will firm up and be ready to unmold. Both cheesecakes keep nicely for up to one week in the refrigerator. Freezing, however, would ruin the cheesecake's smooth texture.

Easy steps for a thin cookie crust



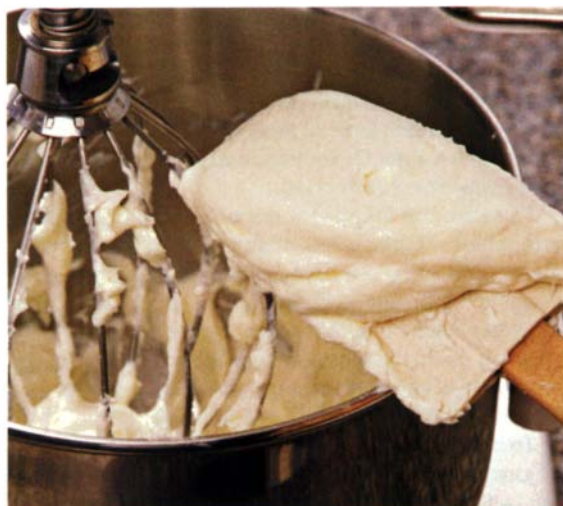
Pat down the crumbs with your fingers and then use a straight-sided glass to press and push the crumbs up the walls.



Cover the crust with a double layer of plastic to prevent sticking and continue spreading the crust with your fingers.



Wrap the pan in a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent leakage.



Use the whisk attachment to mix the cream cheese and sugar until smooth and homogeneous.

RECIPES

Classic Creamy Cheesecake

For a Thanksgiving dessert, I might top this cake with cranberries. Combine 6 Tbs. sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water, $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cornstarch, and about 1 cup cranberries in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce the heat, simmer for 5 to 10 min., swirling the pan occasionally. Let cool to room temperature before spooning over the cheesecake. Serves twelve.

FOR THE GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST:

About 11 double graham crackers, broken into pieces (or $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups graham cracker crumbs)

2 Tbs. sugar

5 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE FILLING:

1 lb. cream cheese, softened to room temperature

1 cup sugar

6 large egg yolks

3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt

3 cups sour cream

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease the bottom and sides of an 8x2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch or higher springform pan.

To make the crust—In a food processor, process the graham crackers and sugar until the cookies are fine crumbs, about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse about 10 times just until incorporated. (Alternatively, put the cookies in a freezer bag and use a rolling pin to crush them into fine crumbs. Transfer to a bowl, add the sugar, and toss with a fork to blend. Stir in the melted butter and toss to incorporate.)

Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, press the mixture into the base of the prepared pan and partway up the sides. Use a flat-bottomed, straight-sided glass to smooth the crumbs over the bottom and farther up the sides (but not all the way to the top). Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that



Scrape the batter into the prepared springform pan.



Pour hot water into a water bath, bake for 45 minutes, and then turn off the heat and, without opening the oven door, let it cook for another hour.



A brief simmer improves pumpkin's flavor, and a quick whiz in the food processor reduces its fibers to a silken purée.



Without the usual pumpkin-pie spices, the pure mellow taste of pumpkin blends perfectly with the pecan and gingersnap crust in this cheesecake.

the crumbs are evenly distributed. Lay plastic wrap over the crumbs to keep them from sticking to your fingers, and use your fingers to continue pressing the crust to a thin, even layer. Wrap the outside of the pan with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent leaking. Cover the crust with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.

To make the filling—In the large bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat the cream cheese and sugar until very smooth, about 3 min., scraping the bowl and beaters as needed. Beat in the egg yolks, beating until the batter is smooth and scraping down the sides as necessary. Add the lemon juice, vanilla, and salt and beat until incorporated. Beat in the sour cream just until blended.

To bake the cheesecake—Pour the batter into the prepared springform pan. Set the pan in a larger pan (a 12x2-inch cake pan or a roasting pan) and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water. Check that the oven is at 350°F and bake the cake for 45 min. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cake cool for 1 hour. Transfer the cheesecake to a rack (the center will still be jiggly) and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight. To unmold and slice the cheesecake, see the sidebar at right.

Pumpkin Cheesecake with Gingersnap & Pecan Crust

I discovered just how astonishingly good pumpkin is when not obscured by cinnamon and ginger when I tasted a pumpkin mousse prepared by Jehanne Burch at the Castle Hill Inn & Resort in Newport, Rhode Island. Her mousse contained only pumpkin, sugar, heavy cream, and gelatin. It was a revelation. If you use an electric mixer, start by beating the cream cheese with the whisk attachment until it's very smooth, and then add the cooked pumpkin mixture and the remaining ingredients. *Serves fourteen.*

FOR THE CRUST:

4¼ oz. gingersnap cookies (about 17 two-inch cookies), broken into pieces
2 oz. (½ cup) pecans, toasted
1 Tbs. sugar
2 pinches salt
½ tsp. ground cinnamon (optional)
4 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted

FOR THE FILLING:

1 cup unsweetened pumpkin purée (I like Libby's)
1 cup sugar
2 cups heavy cream, chilled
1 lb. cream cheese, softened to room temperature
2 large eggs
2 large egg yolks

FOR THE GARNISH:

About 24 pecan halves, toasted

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease the bottom and sides of a 9x2½-inch or higher springform pan.

To make the crust—In a food processor, process the cookies with the pecans, sugar, salt, and cinnamon (if using) until the cookies become fine crumbs,

about 20 seconds. Add the melted butter and pulse about 10 times, just until incorporated. (Alternatively, put the cookies in a freezer bag and use a rolling pin to crush them into fine crumbs. Grind the nuts finely but not to a powder. In a medium bowl, combine all the crust ingredients except the butter and toss with a fork to blend. Stir in the melted butter and toss to incorporate.)

Using your fingers or the back of a spoon, press the mixture into the base of the prepared pan and partway up the sides. Use a flat-bottomed, straight-sided glass to smooth the crumbs over the bottom and farther up the sides (but not all the way to the top). Be sure to press the bottom thoroughly so that the crumbs are evenly distributed. Lay plastic wrap over the crumbs to keep them from sticking to your fingers, and use your fingers to continue pressing the crust to a thin, even layer. Wrap the outside of the pan with a double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil to prevent leaking. Cover the crust with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed.

To make the filling—In a small, heavy saucepan, combine the pumpkin purée and sugar. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a sputtering simmer, stirring constantly, about 5 min. Turn the heat to low and cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture has darkened and thickened to the consistency of apple sauce, about 5 min.

Scrape the mixture into a large food processor and process for 1 min. with the feed tube open (so steam can escape), scraping down the sides. With the motor running, add the chilled cream. Add the softened cream cheese and process for 30 seconds or until smoothly incorporated, scraping down the sides two or three times. Add the eggs and yolks and process for about 5 seconds, just until incorporated.

To bake the cheesecake—Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Set the pan in a larger pan (a 12x2-inch cake pan or a roasting pan) and surround it with 1 inch of very hot water. Check that the oven is at 350°F and bake the cheesecake for 45 min. Turn off the oven without opening the door and let the cheesecake cool for 1 hour. Transfer the cake to a rack (the center will still be jiggy) and cool to room temperature, about 1 hour. Cover the pan with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 6 hours or overnight. To unmold the cheesecake, see the sidebar below.

To garnish the cheesecake—Arrange the pecan halves around the perimeter of the cake. To slice, see the sidebar below.

Rose Levy Beranbaum is the author of The Cake Bible, Rose's Christmas Cookies (both published by William Morrow), and, more recently, The Pie & Pastry Bible (Scribner). ♦

How to unmold a cheesecake without wrecking it

If you've used a springform pan, unmolding can be as easy as removing the ring. To remove the ring cleanly, follow the photos below.

If you want to remove the bottom as well, you'll need to invert the cheesecake twice (if you've used a cake pan instead of a springform, you'll have no choice but to do this). If this is your plan, it's a good idea to

line the bottom of the greased pan with a circle of greased kitchen parchment before baking.

Before unmolding the sides and bottom, be sure the cheesecake is thoroughly chilled (at least six hours in the refrigerator). Have ready a serving plate and another flat plate that's at least as wide as the springform and covered with plastic wrap. Remove the

ring following the photos below. Set the plate with plastic wrap on top of the cheesecake and carefully invert the pan. Heat the base of the springform with a hot, damp cloth or a hair dryer, and lift it off. Peel away the parchment, if used. Set the serving plate lightly on the bottom of the cheesecake (which is now facing up), and reinvert the cake. Lift off the plastic-wrapped plate. If the

cheesecake was baked without a crust, you may need to smooth the sides with a metal spatula.

To cut neat slices, use a sharp, thin-bladed knife dipped in hot water (shake off excess drops) between each slice. For a cheesecake without a crust, a piece of dental floss, held taut, also works (you'll need to cut across the diameter of the cake).



Wipe a hot, damp cloth around the outside of the ring (or use a hair dryer).



Run a metal spatula or a thin knife inside the ring.



Release and gently loosen the ring and then lift it off.



Choosing a holiday turkey for freshness and taste

With so many kinds of turkeys in the market, choosing your holiday bird can be mind-boggling. First you have to choose between a fresh and a frozen turkey, and then you have to decipher all those other labels like “all-natural,” “free-range,” and “organic” that are so freely bandied about. This year, I set out to untangle the web of terms used to label turkeys, and then I did my own tests to learn which turkey really tastes best.

Fresh vs. frozen

The first thing I learned is that there are new labeling laws for fresh turkeys. The new laws allow a turkey to be labeled “fresh” only if it has never been chilled below 26°F. Before December 1997, poultry producers were allowed to use the “fresh” designation on birds that had been chilled as low as 0°F. The new law is designed to assure consumers that the fresh turkey they buy has never been frozen. (Turkey meat, according to the National Turkey Federation, doesn’t freeze at 32°F, but at a temperature closer to 26°F.)

Turkeys chilled below 0°F must be labeled “frozen.” Or, if they’re sold already defrosted, you may see “previously frozen” on the label. Most turkey producers agree that freezing affects the texture

and taste of the meat. When the water in the cells freezes, it disrupts the cellular structure of the meat, causing it to lose moisture (and therefore flavor) as it thaws. Many large-scale turkey producers compensate for this loss by injecting a solution of water, oil, and seasoning into the meat before freezing. These turkeys may be labeled “self-basting.”

Some turkeys are neither “fresh” nor “frozen.” With the change in laws, there is a turkey category left hanging out there—birds that have been chilled below 26°F, but not below 0°F. They can’t be labeled fresh, but they don’t have to be labeled frozen, leaving the turkey industry unsure of what to call them. So if you see a bird that isn’t labeled either fresh or frozen, it’s most likely in this category, although sometimes this type of bird will also be identified as “hard-chilled” or “not previously frozen.” But to save confusion, some producers (Butterball, for example) no longer produce birds in this category, offering their customers a simpler choice between fresh and frozen.

Beyond fresh—specialty turkeys

Once you’ve determined if a turkey is fresh or frozen, you’ll have other qualities to con-

sider. Many turkeys carry labels like “all-natural,” “free-range,” and “organic.” Still other specialty turkeys don’t fall into neat categories but are distinguished by brand. (Most specialty turkeys are sold fresh during the holidays, but some may be sold frozen. At other times of the year, it’s pretty hard to find a fresh turkey.)

Organic turkeys—After much debate and public activism, the USDA issued a policy in January 1999 that allows a turkey farmer to apply to any one of a number of regional or federal certifying entities. If the farmer meets all the criteria of one of the certifying agencies (such as Organic Growers & Buyers Association, California Certified Organic Farmers, or Oregon Tilth), the birds may be labeled organic. Because the certification process is a long one, there are currently only a few certified organic turkeys in the marketplace, although many farmers are working towards this goal.

Free-range turkeys—This term seems to stir up a bit of debate since, by USDA definition, “free-range” simply means that the birds have access to the outside. What really affects the quality of the meat, however, is how crowded the birds are, not whether they can go outdoors. For instance, some of the best-

quality turkeys are not technically free-range simply because the uncaged birds do not roam outdoors. In order to be certified organic, however, a turkey must be free-range.

“Natural” turkeys—The term “natural” has very little meaning when it comes to a raw ingredient such as turkey. It simply means “no artificial ingredient or color added, and minimally processed.” The term makes no reference to the way the turkey was raised.

Kosher turkeys—A kosher label may only be used on poultry that has been processed under rabbinical supervision. The turkeys are grain-fed with no antibiotics and are allowed to roam freely. In addition to being individually processed and inspected, kosher turkeys are soaked in a salt brine before being packaged which gives them their distinctive savory character.

Brand-name turkeys—Brand-name turkeys are an increasingly important market for holiday birds. Companies like Murray’s, Bell & Evans, Maple Lawn Farms, Koch’s, Willie Bird, Eberly’s, Empire Kosher, Diestel, and many more all sell turkeys based on their reputation. When interviewed, most of the folks who produce and sell these turkeys explained that the major difference between their turkeys

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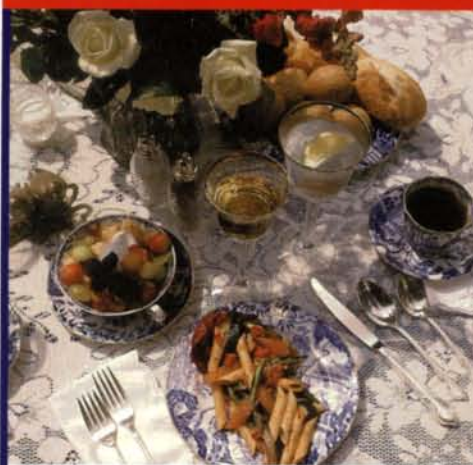
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and others lies in the quality of the feed their birds get. Most often, there are no animal by-products in the feed and usually no antibiotics.

Next, I learned that most of these birds are raised without being caged. The lack of animal fat in their diet and the fact that the birds can move around freely translates into a turkey that grows more slowly than a factory-raised bird. This means that the meat has a chance to develop a richer flavor and denser texture.

A matter of taste

With so many choices available, the real question remains: which turkey tastes best? To answer this, I roasted a variety of birds—everything from a frozen mass-produced turkey to a fresh certified organic one—to see for myself.

The most dramatic difference that I noticed was between the commercially raised birds and the specialty birds. I tasted several brand-name specialty birds (free-range, no antibiotics, and all-vegetable feed) and was altogether impressed. They had a good, rich turkey flavor, and the texture was meaty and not at all dry. As a fan of dark meat, I loved the way the thigh and drumstick meat was moist and succulent yet not oily or ropy.

Obviously there are differences in the quality of specialty turkeys, and I found that the best assurance is to talk to a knowledgeable butcher or distributor (some of the producers even have web sites). I found that the best turkeys come from small producers who are exigent about the feeding and care of their

flocks. While one of the best turkeys that I tasted was certified organic, there were others that I liked just as much that had simply not undergone the certifying process. The extra time and effort of becoming certified translates into a higher price tag on a certified organic turkey (as much as \$3.99 per pound).

Next I tried to determine if there was a grave difference between fresh and frozen turkeys, and the results were less conclusive. In general, I found that fresh turkeys were moister with a deeper turkey flavor than birds that had been frozen, but if they had not been side by side, I might not have been as discerning. The most important factor is the quality of the turkey *before* it heads to the freezer. Also, the freezer storage time and thaw-

ing can have an effect on the quality of a frozen turkey.

And finally, I tasted some of the self-basting turkeys. I'm not a big fan of additives, but I also found that the basting solution makes the meat taste too much like processed turkey deli meat. I don't recommend them.

I do have a few important words of advice for cooking a specialty turkey: Use a meat thermometer, and start checking the thigh before the estimated time is up (the turkey is done when the thigh meat registers 165°F). I've found that these turkeys tend to roast a bit faster than others do. (One estimate is that they cook ten minutes per pound less than average.)

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦

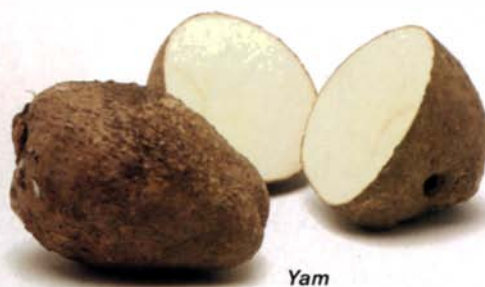
Sweet potatoes vs. yams

Scan the potato selection in most groceries and you'll probably see a sign for yams above coppery-colored, pointy root vegetables. If you then visit an Hispanic or Asian market, you'll find a decidedly different vegetable—with dark, rough, scaly skin—also labeled as a yam. The truth is that the former, the supermarket yam, is not a yam at all but a type of sweet potato.

The **sweet potato**, a member of the morning glory family, is grown around the world, although it's indigenous to the Americas and is especially popular in the southern United States. According to the North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission, the naming confusion began several decades ago when Louisiana farmers developed a new sweet potato with dark-orange flesh that cooks up moister and softer than the light-skinned, pale-fleshed sweet potatoes that were common at the time. To distinguish this new breed, they called it a



Sweet potato



Yam

yam and the name stuck. Today, the USDA requires that these "yams" (sometimes called American or Louisiana yams) also be correctly labeled as sweet potatoes.

Sweet potatoes range from light brown to reddish pink to deep copper and even purple, with interiors that are anything from a dry, pale ivory to a moist, deep orange.

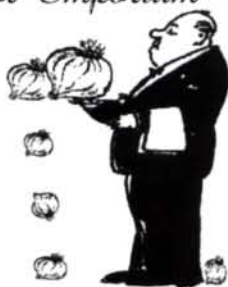
The **true yam** is an unrelated species that's quite starchy (much more so than the sweet potato) and is a staple food for much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. There are many varieties of yams (also called *ñame* or *igname*), ranging from small and potato shaped to huge and irregularly shaped (one source claims that they can weigh up to 500 pounds, which is why they're sometimes sold in chunks).

The somewhat shaggy skin (often peeled before cooking) is usually pale to dark brown, and the crisp, dry flesh is white to ivory to yellow. Yams, which taste rather bland and are not sweet, can be boiled, baked, or fried; they're commonly used in soups and stews.

To add to the confusion, the unrelated **boniato** is sometimes called a white sweet potato, Cuban sweet potato, or batata. Somewhere between an ordinary potato and a sweet potato in taste and texture, boniato are sold in Latin markets and used in any way either a sweet or white potato is. (The sweet potato, the yam, and the boniato are all unrelated to our common potato.)

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Cheesecake 101

You may not have realized it, but cheesecakes are just custards that happen to be made with cream cheese instead of milk. And like custards, there are two major categories of cheesecake—those with starch and those without. Adding starch to cheesecakes, or to any custard, affects both the cooking method and the texture, making it firmer and less likely to curdle or weep.

Without starch, cheesecakes are creamy

The texture of a cheesecake without starch is quite smooth and, if the batter contains sour cream, it's also incredibly creamy: a sensuous, luxurious combination that's perfect for a rich dessert cheesecake (see the recipes on pp. 67–69).

Without starch, cheesecakes rely on eggs for their thickening power. Thickening occurs when raw egg proteins unwind and link together, which is what happens when eggs cook. Also, emulsifiers in the egg yolk—lecithin and lipoproteins—help give the cheesecake a smooth texture.

Like other custards without starch, cheesecakes need gentle heat to prevent curdling. A little heat cooks the proteins just enough to make them loosely link together to form a thick but smooth texture; but beyond a certain heat threshold, the proteins tighten up and form curds. As with *crème anglaise* (a boiled custard), which must be stirred constantly over very low heat, a cheesecake without starch must be baked very gently and evenly to avoid curdling.

There are several ways to shield a cheesecake without starch against too much heat. Betsy Murrelle, a cookware shop owner in Banner Elk, North Carolina (and an outstanding cook), bakes her cheesecakes in a 275°F oven for one hour, and then leaves them in the turned-off oven for another hour. My friend Doris Koplin, a professional baker and cheesecake expert, bakes her cheesecake without starch at 350°F for 30 minutes (just enough time to get the batter hot) and then she turns off the heat and leaves the cheesecake in the closed oven for about an hour to continue cooking very slowly.

Another method is to bake the cheesecake in a water bath. In a 350°F oven, the temperature in a water bath will hover around 200°F, which allows the custard to set without curdling.

Cheesecakes with starch set up firm

When you add cornstarch or flour to cheesecake, the texture becomes firmer and coarser—maybe not ideal for a dessert, but I find it quite appropriate for a savory cheesecake. The thickening occurs when the granules of starch are heated, which causes them to swell and eventually pop, releasing their contents and creating a tangled network of molecules (for details on how starch thickens, see *Fine Cooking* #5, p. 18).

Starch in the batter affects the method of cooking. Just as *crème pâtissière* (pastry cream), which is essentially a *crème anglaise* plus starch, can be



This Grand Canyon crack, which formed after refrigeration, indicates that the cheesecake spent too much time in the oven.

cooked over direct medium-low heat without curdling, so can a cheesecake with starch be cooked without a water bath in a moderately hot oven.

In this case, the starch protects the eggs from scrambling by preventing egg coagulation. How? I lean toward a theory that swollen starch granules physically “get in the way” of the linking egg proteins, thereby slowing down coagulation. Whatever the mechanism, the presence of starch means you can safely cook cheesecake at 325°F for up to an hour without a water bath, just as you can bring *crème pâtissière* to a boil without fear of curdling.

Why cheesecakes crack

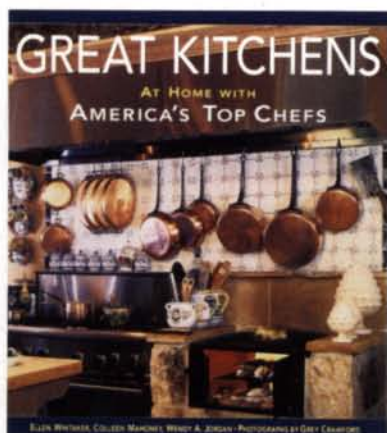
The question I’m asked most frequently about cheesecakes is “Why did my cheesecake crack?” It’s difficult for cooks to believe my answer: it’s overcooked. “That can’t be,” the cook protests. “The center jiggled a tiny bit, as if it weren’t done.” That’s true when the cake is hot, but examine it after chilling and you’ll see that it’s firm and dry right around the crack. Overcooking causes proteins to shrink and the cake to dry out, leading to cracks.

I think that judging cheesecake doneness is one of the most deceptive and disconcerting things in cooking. I’ve made Rose Levy Beranbaum’s cheesecakes successfully many times, and every time there’s a section in the center, at least three inches in diameter, that wobbles wildly as if it were totally runny inside. I’m always amazed that after chilling, the cake is perfectly cooked.

The simplest way to avoid cracks is to shorten the cooking time, but you also can play with other variables. Sugar slows cooking by blocking the coagulation of proteins, so adding more provides an extra barrier against overcooking. Another option is to cut an egg out of the recipe. Fewer eggs means fewer proteins, a slower rate of coagulation, and slower cooking.

If the unmentionable does occur and you end up with minor fissures in the cake, do what my baker friend Doris does: ice the cake with whipped cream, and no one will ever know the difference.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist and a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, wrote the award-winning CookWise (William Morrow). ♦



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Turkeys

To buy a specialty turkey this holiday season, check your local supermarket first. **Whole Foods** markets, like many better grocery stores, carry **Bell & Evans** turkeys. Many butchers can order a fresh turkey for you with enough notice. You can also check the

cooperative extension service of your state university, which can refer you to local turkey farms. You can mail-order free-range and organic turkeys from **D'Artagnan** (800/327-8246; www.dartagnan.com), or order specialty turkeys on the web from **Maple Lawn Farms** (www.maplelawn.com) and **WillieBird** (www.williebird.com). **Empire Kosher** turkeys are sold at grocery stores in every state (see www.empirekosher.com for a store near you) and through the www.koshersupermarket.com.

Mexican Rice

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Winter Squash

To order the **Westfield Farm** goat cheese Ris Lacoste recommends for her roasted butternut squash salad, visit www.chevre.com.

Crêpes

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To buy white truffle oil for Katy Sparks's mashed potatoes, try **Dean & DeLuca** (800/221-7714; www.dean-deluca.com), or **Plantin** (201/867-4590; www.plantin.com).

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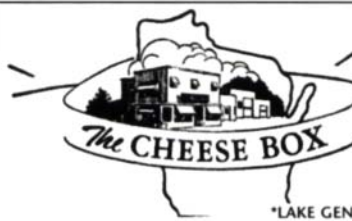
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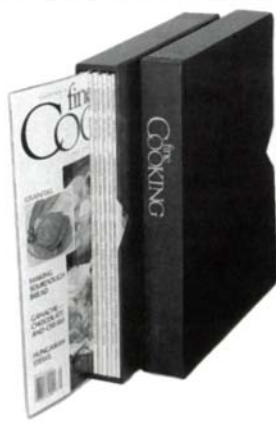
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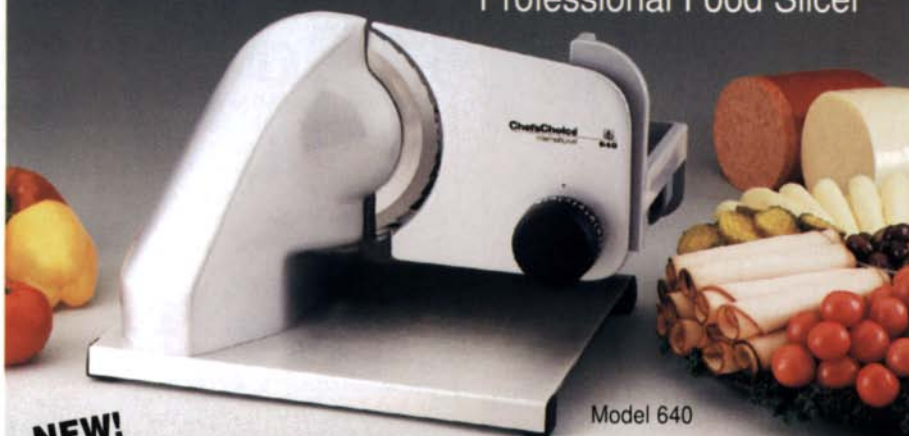
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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Stuffed Roast Turkey	29	560	250	73	0	28	9	9	7	220	1140	0	based on 12 servings
Giblet Stock	29	20	10	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	20	10	0	per ¼ cup
Cornbread Stuffing	29	330	150	6	40	16	6	4	5	90	610	3	per cup
Cornbread	30	250	90	4	36	10	2	2	5	25	360	2	per cup of cubes
Italian Bread & Sausage Stuffing	30	300	180	11	18	20	6	10	3	60	660	1	per cup
Madeira Gravy	30	70	35	1	4	4	1.5	1.5	1	15	300	0	per ¼ cup
Pan Gravy with Herbs	31	60	40	2	2	4.5	1.5	2	1	25	300	0	per ¼ cup
Master Method for Roasting Squash	33	120	30	2	24	3	1.5	0.5	0.5	5	290	5	per ½ cup
Squash Ravioli with Sherried Onions	34	160	80	4	17	9	5	2	1	35	270	1	per ravioli
Roasted Butternut Squash Salad	35	450	270	11	38	30	8	13	8	15	490	10	½ dressing; % bacon
Sherry Maple Vinaigrette	36	80	80	0	1	9	2	4	3	0	100	0	per tablespoon
Butternut Squash & Potato Gratin	36	260	160	5	21	18	9	5	3	45	420	3	
Brown Sugar Squash Pie	37	400	210	6	45	23	14	7	1	140	460	3	% optional decoration
Pâte Brisée	37	160	90	2	14	10	6	3	0	25	130	0	per ⅛ of 10 oz.
Sweet & Spicy Sticky Chicken	40	320	80	29	30	9	2	3	2	115	2040	1	
Braised Chicken Thighs with Vegetables	40	480	250	37	17	28	9	11	5	130	790	5	
Broiled Coconut-Lime Chicken Thighs	41	440	270	36	10	30	10	11	6	115	1220	3	
Arroz Rojo de Chile Ancho (Red Rice)	44	290	120	6	36	14	4	7	1	15	420	2	⅛ recipe % optionals
Arroz Verde (Green Rice)	45	210	70	4	30	8	4	3	1	15	320	1	⅛ recipe
Arroz Huérfano (Orphan's Rice)	45	380	220	9	32	24	4	11	7	10	340	2	⅛ recipe
Basic Crêpe Recipe	48	90	50	3	7	6	3	2	0	50	45	0	per crêpe
Curry Chicken Crêpes	49	820	500	37	45	55	30	18	4	280	780	3	
Apple-Filled Crêpes with Caramel Sauce	49	800	360	6	109	41	24	12	2	190	150	8	% whipped or ice cream
Chocolate-Filled Beignets	58	140	90	2	12	10	4	4	1	30	70	0	per beignet
Crème Anglaise	58	30	15	1	3	1.5	0.5	0.5	0	40	10	0	per tablespoon
Cider-Glazed Pork with Fennel Coulis	62	1060	530	54	57	59	26	23	7	215	920	4	
Milk-Braised Loin of Pork with Fennel	63	820	450	40	54	50	21	22	3	160	940	5	
Classic Creamy Cheesecake	67	470	310	7	34	34	20	10	2	185	290	0	
Pumpkin Cheesecake	68	430	310	6	26	35	18	12	3	150	200	1	
Potato & Ham Hash	82	610	290	16	66	33	12	17	3	55	1790	8	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

Potato & Ham Hash Makes a Satisfying “Diner” Dinner



This hash gets a lot of play in our house. It may be a humble one-dish meal, but it has it all: sweet sautéed onions and peppers tossed with cooked, tender Yukon Gold potatoes and some really flavorful ham. While most of my favorite comfort foods tend to need long cooking, this one is ready in less than half an hour. I usually cut up the potatoes and get them cooking and then prepare and sauté the rest of the ingredients. Once the potatoes are cooked, I’m ready to do the fun part—mixing the ingredients together in the pan. Start mixing with a light hand, and then mash. The mashing makes the hash come together as a whole—kind of like a big pancake—instead of all the little bits

staying separate. I mash my hash just slightly so that the potatoes are still in discernible pieces, but you can mash more if you like.

Another thing I love about this dish is that I almost always have the ingredients in the house. I buy a little good-quality ham (or domestic prosciutto, which is just fine for cooking) at the grocery each week because it’s an ingredient that can really make a meal, whether in this hash, in a frittata, or tossed with pasta. And although I like the way Yukon Golds cook up in this dish, you could really substitute whatever potatoes you have on hand. You can also experiment with corned beef, leftover roast beef or pot roast, smoked fish, or cooked shrimp in place of the ham.

Potato & Ham Hash

I enjoy this hash on its own often right out of the pan—but a couple of fried eggs go well, too. *Serves two.*

- 1¼ lb. unpeeled Yukon Gold or other yellow potatoes, cut into small pieces (about ½-inch square)**
- 1 Tbs. plus ½ tsp. coarse salt**
- 2 Tbs. butter**
- 2 Tbs. olive oil**
- 1 medium onion, roughly cut into ½-inch dice**
- 1 small green bell pepper, roughly cut into ½-inch dice**
- 3 oz. thinly sliced country ham or other good-quality ham or domestic prosciutto, roughly chopped into ½-inch squares or slivers**
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 to 2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Put the potatoes into a large saucepan with enough water to cover by at least

1 inch. Add 1 Tbs. of the salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a rapid simmer, and cook until the potatoes are tender all the way through, 5 to 8 min. Drain well in a colander and let sit.

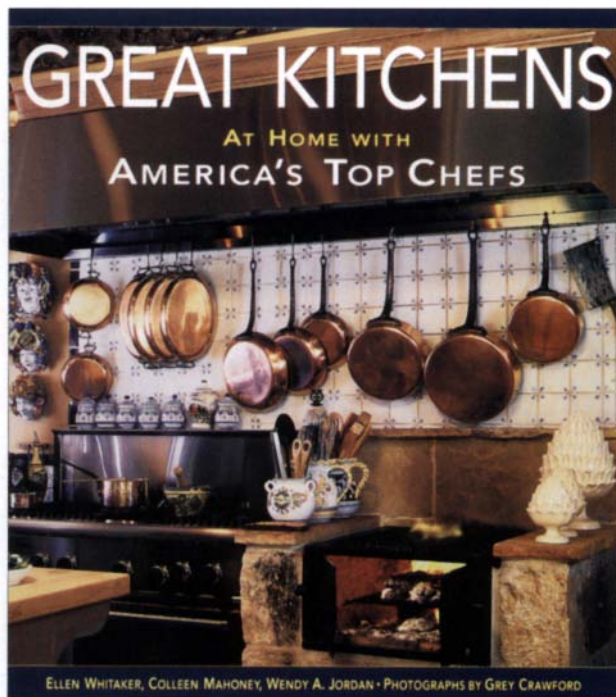
Meanwhile, in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 Tbs. of the butter and 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. When the butter is melted and the pan is hot, add the onion and green pepper and sauté, stirring frequently, until the vegetables are soft and the onions are well browned, about 8 min. Push the vegetables to one side and add the ham. Leave the ham alone in the pan for a few minutes. When it begins to turn crisp, add the garlic and stir all the ingredients together. Continue cooking until the garlic is fragrant and begins to soften, 1 to 2 min. Transfer the mixture to a bowl.

Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. butter and 1 Tbs. olive oil in the pan over medium-high heat. Add the drained potatoes, distributing them in one layer if possible. Let the potatoes sit undisturbed to brown, about 5 min. Meanwhile, sprinkle the remaining ½ tsp. salt over the potatoes. Return the onion and pepper mixture to the pan and mix it into the potatoes. Cook the hash for another 3 to 5 min. As it cooks, alternately fold the mixture over onto itself and mash it together with a metal spatula, letting it sit for periods of about 30 seconds in the pan to brown.

Mash the hash just enough so that it holds together but the potatoes are still in discernible pieces. Grind a generous amount of fresh black pepper (8 to 10 grinds) over the hash and fold it in. Remove the pan from the heat, add the parsley, and serve.

Susie Middleton is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦

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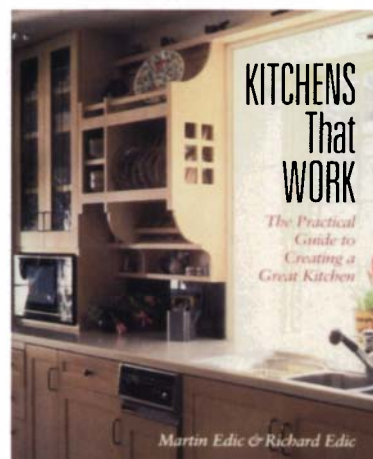
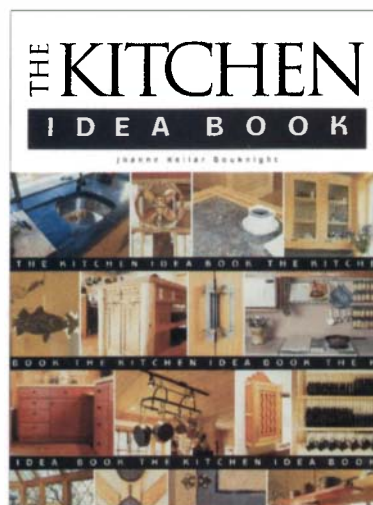
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ARTISAN FOODS

Flatbread Baked with Soul

"American Flatbread is a return to bread's roots, an endeavor not to mass-produce bread, but to explore the possibility of how good bread can be," says George Schenk (below). The exploration began 14 years ago with an oven improvised from rock and fieldstone, and it continues today in a refurbished horse barn in Waitsfield, Vermont,

where George's committed crew knead, assemble, and bake about 1,000 flatbread pizzas a day for a handful of specialty markets.

A former entomologist and ski bum, George attributes the success of his flatbread baking experiment to three essentials: "good ingredients, good technique, and good tools." His ingredients are the finest: organic flour, vegetables, and herbs, pristine water,

local cheeses. His technique is simply to keep the scale small and personal. His primary tools are a mammoth cauldron for simmering tomato sauce and a community-built clay oven that he designed.

But there's a fourth element as well: a good spirit, or, in George's words, "the song of the baker's heart," that is, what we think about as we're cooking. "Food has memory," he says. "It remembers the process, it remembers the hand that made it."



Every Tuesday, regardless of weather, George cooks up a batch of tomato sauce in a 250-pound cauldron over a wood fire.



Ingredients get VIP treatment: water for the dough is fetched from a nearby spring; toppings include home-made sausage and Vermont asiago and mozzarella.



The igloo-shaped oven has no thermostat. Instead, the baker controls the heat by adding precisely split maple logs as needed.



On Friday and Saturday nights, the bakery becomes an informal restaurant, and the line forms early for made-to-order flatbread, with its crisp crust, chewy rim, and bubbly cheese topping.